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Lost Spirituals

Lily Young Cohen

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VOLUME

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Mauma

Frontispiece

Lost Spirituals

BY

LILY YOUNG COHEN

With Thirty-six Illustrations by
KENNETH K. POINTER

And Forty-one Plates of Musical Compositions as Composed by Negroes and Set down in Music by the Author

NEW YORK
WALTER NEALE
Publisher of General Literature
1928

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this book, *Lost Spirituals,* is intended to comprehend more than music and song: it is meant to embrace the soul of the Negro as found in its highest expression, in his daily converse and folklore as well as in his melodies and in his lyrics. Here the Negro himself is treated as a spiritual; so is his prose; so is his verse. And all are *Lost.* At least, the social order in which all had their birth is gone, never to be found again, in any future civilization. In this and in other books, however, the Negro lives, and will ever live. So far as the contents of this volume are concerned, all would have been lost, never to be found, if Miss Lily Young Cohen had not written out her memories of her childhood; if she had not put into written music the songs she heard sung, that, never before to her knowledge, had been transcribed; if she had not retold, in type, the folk tales told to her by her old family servants; if she had not here set down the verse repeated to her time and again by the faithful Negroes of her tender years.

As applied to the outpourings of the Negro soul, the term *spirituals* is elastic, and properly so. Nevertheless, there seems to be some confusion in the public mind as to the meaning of the locution, there being a tendency to an unjustifiable restriction, a concentration on the religious significance usually accorded the word. To be sure, the

Southern Negro is intensely religious, and possibly all his emotions have their origin in religious fervor; but the Negro would be the last to characterize all his songs as "chu'ch music," although many approaching the ribald are lustily sung at religious meetings, in church, at funerals, and upon other occasions of great solemnity. The term *spirituals,* then, properly describes nearly all Negro songs that are fit to print.

However, a few are unprintable; but these may be traced to the Negro's white master. Contrary to a belief that is entertained by many persons who have not been brought into close contact with the Negro in the South (the writer of this Introduction passed his first nineteen years among the Negroes of rural Virginia), the Southern Negro, both man and woman, is not given to coarse expressions, to unprintable language. In this he is in no respect inferior to his white brother. He is modest in his person, chaste in his expressions, and singularly pure in mind. So is the beast of the field, the animal of the jungle, and all other mammals except civilized man. Not that the Negro is a brute animal; far from it: but he has lived in the field, in the forest, and has dwelt amid purity. That he is imaginative, the songs that he has made and sung, the folk tales that he has told, as recorded in this volume, show beyond cavil; but his imagination has not become perverted: he is yet to sing with an impure heart.

It may be that the Negro of the low country of South Carolina is less sophisticated than are the members of his race elsewhere in America. In Charleston (the Charleston Negro is the subject of this volume) he is still the

same Negro of three centuries ago, and of Revolutionary War days, and of the dark days of Secession, and still retains in some measure his African folk songs, language, habits, and undisciplined emotions. He is of the West Coast of Africa, where for many centuries his ancestors have been further advanced biologically and mentally than have been the aborigines elsewhere on the Dark Continent, and where he practised some of the simpler arts of civilization. Africa, to the Negro of South Carolina, does not seem remote. Indeed, in that State are now living Negroes who were born in the Congo region, captured there, and taken to South Carolina as recently as a year or two before the outbreak of the War Between the States. The last cargo of native Africans was landed near Charleston only a few months before the Ordinance of Secession was passed. There some still live, or did until recently, and yet may live for some years.

In South Carolina, particularly in the Sea Island section, the language (perhaps *patois* would be a more exact term) spoken by the Negro, the Gullah tongue, is largely unintelligible to those who are not familiar with the African words. In Gullah many of the folk songs are chanted, the spirituals sung, the stories told. As Gullah would be hardly comprehensible to many of the readers of this book, the words of that language or patois as originally used by the Negro in song and story have been translated by Miss Cohen into the dialect that is also used by Negroes who have lost the words of African origin. Nor was Gullah ever spoken by all the Negroes of Charleston, some of whom were not of West Coast African origin, but were

brought into South Carolina from other Colonies, and later from other States. In Charleston, therefore, there are two separate and well-defined Negro dialects. These are becoming gradually merged.

They are lovable creatures, these Charleston Negroes, these and their kind who appear in this volume. Soon they will be no more; for a sophistication is now abroad throughout the South. A new Negro, better educated, finer in many respects than the old, is being reared amid a new order, winning the regard and confidence of all. But he will never excel the old, nor will the white man, in those simple virtues that so endeared the blackamoor of three centuries to the populace of the civilization as a whole in which he took so essential and so noble a part. In no small measure, the civilization of the South, existent nowhere else on earth, in no age, was reared upon a foundation constructed by the Negro. He kept in check the excesses of culture, the tendencies of civilization to inhumanities, to extravagance of spirit, to a worldliness leading to callousness, and this he did by his simple life, in field and in forest, and in the quarters that were his home.

Furthermore, the Negro gave to the South arts that were not indigenous in a civilization of English heritage. For example, he composed music, and music is the greatest of all the arts. His was the only music to originate within Southern boundaries. When Antonin Dvorak, the great Hungarian composer, set out to write his masterpiece, *New World Symphony,* his inspiration was the harmonic utterances of the Southern Negro, which he believed to be the only themes in music characteristically American and

wholly original with the race from which they sprung. Again, when that great master sent forth a composition that enchanted the world, *Humoresque,* he gladly acknowledged his indebtedness to *Old Folks at Home,* which, although not composed by a Negro, nevertheless could not have come into being but for Negro creative methods.

The Negro vitally influenced the literature of his new home. Indeed, it would be difficult to mention a book in which his influence was not apparent, and in prose and in verse he has been the subject on which his white master has loved to dwell. Take the Negro out of Southern literature, and it would be impoverished indeed, and would be lacking in pastoral charm, the bucolic, which even pervades urban life as it is portrayed in Southern literature. The lyrics of Stephen Collins Foster would never have been written. There would have been no old Kentucky home, no old folks at home, no little old log cabin in the lane; to have gone back to Dixie would hardly have been worth while: there would have been no Dixie as created by song and story. There would have been no Joel Chandler Harris, F. Hopkinson Smith, Ruth McEnery Stuart, Thomas Nelson Page. Without the Negro the South would not have been the land of romance, of chivalry, a land with a civilization that has captured the imagination of the world.

In the beauties of the lowly spirit, in the sheer joy of simplicity, the life of the Southern Negro was a daily lesson in forbearance. Fidelity, love indestructible, the ardor of sacrifice, the willingness to lay all his poor little property upon any altar of need, the gift of his soul, his

spiritual all, to his loved ones, black or white,—such were his gifts, such were the lessons he taught by his daily life. The world is better that he lived; the Southern white man is the better; by him civilization has been exalted.

So Miss Cohen has shown the Charleston Negro in this incomparable study, interpreting his unique character, his rare spirit, his mental processes, his folk stories, his songs, his life day by day. In no other account of which I have any knowledge,—and I believe I have read pretty much everything about the Southern Negro that has been published,—in no other volume is the heart of the Negro so truly revealed, so exquisitely interpreted. A member of an old Charleston family, dating back to the early settlements, reared in a home of wealth and of rare culture, possessed of ripe scholarship, extensively read in the ancient classical languages, a linguist of the Romance tongues, an accomplished musician, and a professional writer of distinction, she could not be better fitted to interpret Negro life in South Carolina and notate Negro music from memory. Here we have songs that she learned in childhood, music that she has preserved for posterity, and which would be forever lost if it had not been written out by herself, and now published for the first time. The words of many of the songs, too, as given in this volume, are here put into print for the first time, and would be lost but for Miss Cohen's diligence.

As it seems to me, Mr. Kenneth K. Pointer has caught the spirit of the Charleston Negro and has materialized its rare charm in the drawings with which he has illustrated this volume. Together he and Miss Cohen orally discussed

the characters that appear in this book, their surroundings, and the life of which they were a part. The result is, to my mind, illustrations that really illustrate. So accomplished an artist as Mr. Pointer could hardly have failed in giving an epic sweep to his graphic compositions. For surely there is the sweep of the epic in the Negro life and the social order in which it was lived as revealed in this book by Miss Cohen's work. Thus, in this volume two sympathetic artists have met, each highly skilled in the two separate professions, yet two professions so nearly allied. Between them they hold up a picture of unusual charm, surely unique, since nothing else of the sort exists.

Certainly the Negro has been depicted in other books by masters of the art of literary composition and by masters of the pen and the brush, and what they have written and drawn and painted has delighted countless thousands; but Miss Cohen and Mr. Pointer seem to me in this volume so to have rounded out the character of the Charleston Negro as to have added a sense of finality to the theme. Here the diamond, as it were, sparkles in its flawlessness, as if some master cutter had brought his gem to perfection, to a state where nothing else could be done to augment the refraction. I am willing to stake my reputation as a professional editor, author, and literary critic, and as a publisher, which vocations I have exercised for the past thirty-four years, that this book is a high achievement in American literature. Of the many hundreds of books published by the Neale house, including many separate publications that are now woven into the warp and woof of American letters and justly counted a part of our cultural

literature, this volume is one of three only to which I personally have contributed an introduction. I am proud of the opportunity, both personally and as a publisher, to sponsor it.

WALTER NEALE.

1928.

PREFACE

HAPPY indeed was the child of prosperity who had the good fortune to be born and brought up in the South during the '70's and '80's. Such a child had not only the affectionate care of cultured parents but was, too, encompassed by a devotion and love, pure, innocent, protecting, yet at the same time almost idolatrous; a love that longed for expression and, finding it, lavished it upon the white child; a love infantile, sincere. This was the love of the faithful colored servants of that time.

They are all quickly passing away now, those grown-up children of that dusky race, with their simplicity and their songs. But few of the types remain where once were found so many. Sometimes it seems sad to very tears to recall the dead and happy time when the little white child could lay her head in confidence upon the black man's breast for consolation after a cruel fall, or other tear-provoking accident, or after some misunderstanding, or punishment by some judicious relative; knowing that the tears would be tenderly dried; knowing, too, that on that black breast

would be found a sympathy that could only spring from a heart as ungrown and childlike as her own. So now, before they are all gone, it seems but just to place this inadequate tribute of regret and affection,—yes, affection!—to the memory of those who lightened and gladdened and sometimes touched to sadness the childhood of many, with their quaint songs, their laughter, their philosophy, and their pathos.

So they sang in their simplicity

So I have culled some scattered songs that grew like wild flowers in their sweet crudeness, with only the warmth of the Negro heart to foster them, and have twined them

about the beings from whom they sprung. These songs are not musical masterpieces, nor are they inspired poetry; but here let them live just as they used to be sung,—the melodious vibrations of those simple souls whose voices now are stilling fast.

L. Y. C.

1928.

"Dat's right, daater; mek a hominy-pot ob yo' ole mauma"

Facing page 21

Lost Spirituals

I

A FIRST MEMORY

THE child about whom these memories cluster had always, from the very beginning, been surrounded by beloved things, by loved and loving beings. There was the big house with its high-ceiled rooms, the sun-kissed garden under the warm Southern sky,—now blue, now violet, now bronze, now gold,—from which the least breath of air at almost any season would bring to the little pink nostrils gusts of the richest perfume. There were her fond parents and the less close, but more indulgent, if possible, relations.

Above all, there was the great peaceful nursery, exquisitely open and airy, wherein seemed always to be with her the central figure of her baby universe,—her black-faced caretaker, her unfailing comforter, her tried slave, her doting nurse, all in one, known to everyone as

"Mauma." And of all the beings that lavished their love on the child, this last one stood first.

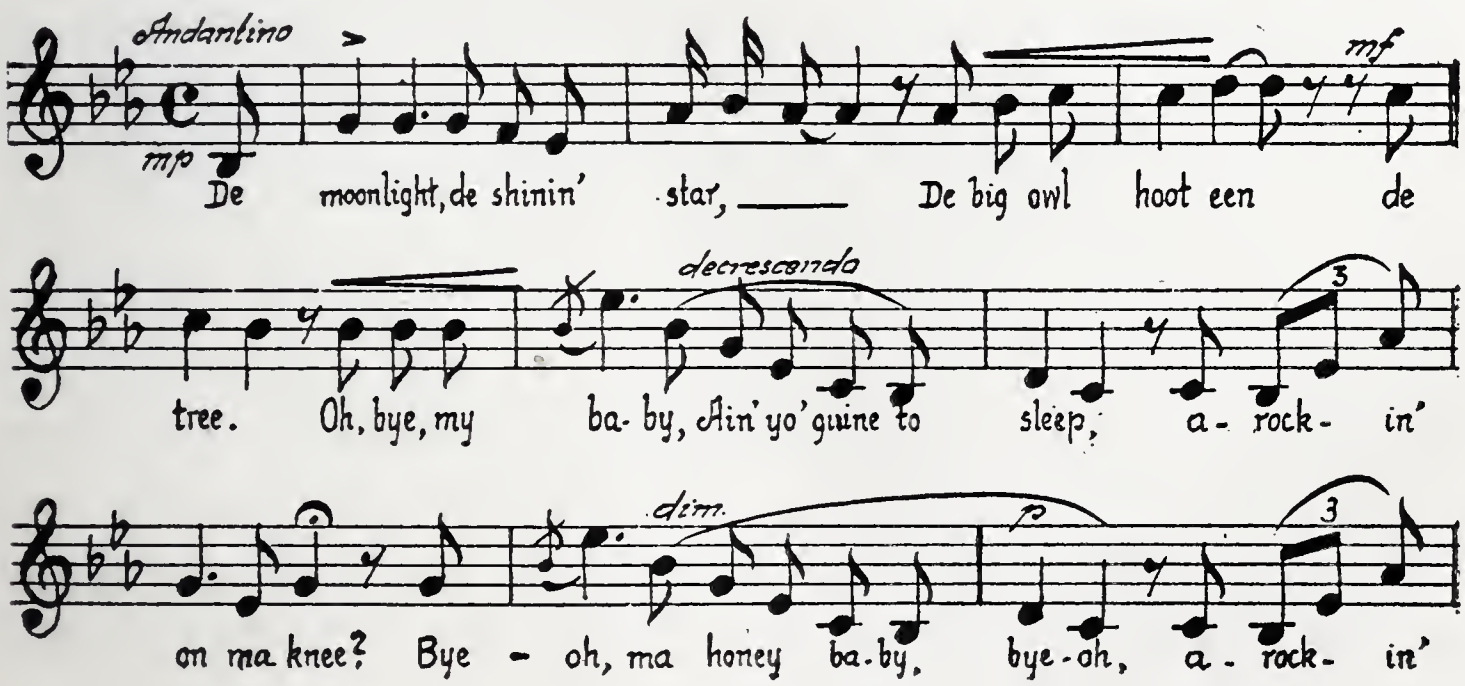
How often, long before the child had outgrown infant frocks, would she sit upon that nurse's generous lap, her exclusive baby throne,—and holding a large piece of white paper in her tiny rosy fingers, would tear off wee bits and, moistening them with her little tongue, would, without a murmur of protest from her victim, paste the scraps on the adoring face of her mauma, enjoyment of the contrast of color shining in her deep blue eyes and rippling in her limpid laughter. Whereupon the old woman would chuckle indulgently into her little mistress's happy face and say:

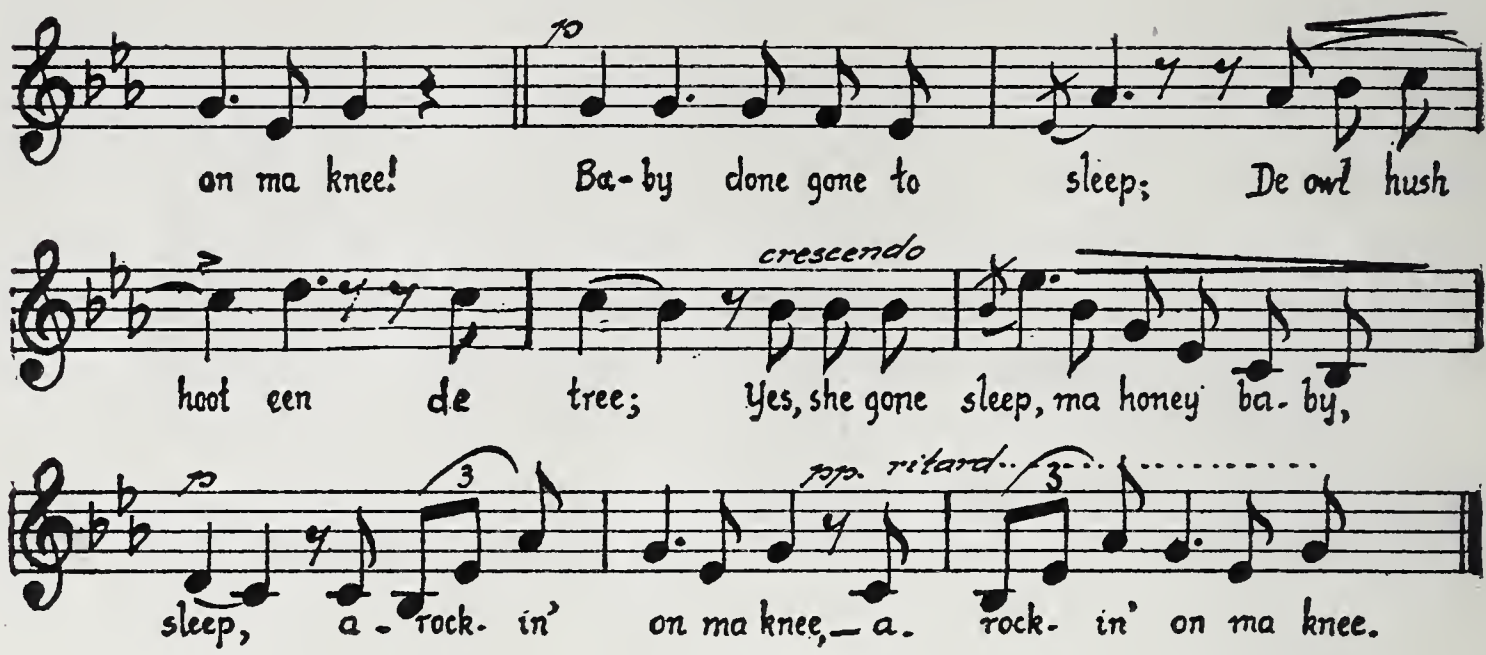
"Dat's all right, daater,"—she had, with humble affection, called the child her daughter from the very day of the little creature's birth, just exactly as she had used the name "Bunkum" toward the child's father, whose nurse she had been from his earliest days, until the time came when he outgrew that title and became her "young mawsa,"—"Dat's right, daater; mek a hominy-pot ob yo ole mauma. She ain' gwine eber min' wot yo do, ma lamb."

By means of just such self-forgetful indulgence, the child,—too undeveloped in mind to appreciate the difference between black and white, too unquestioning to draw nice distinctions between equals and inferiors, between relations and servants,—was drawn from the very first into giving implicit trust and love to the elderly colored woman, who drew hardly a breath apart from the little one, who never by day nor night left that infant's side, and who knew and granted every wish of her "daater" long before Nature had given to the child the power of expression.

So, naturally enough, as time went on, the one person on earth whom the child heeded without question and followed without hesitation was this woman of the colored race who guarded those baby days with tenderest care, and whom the lisping tongue had early learned to call "mauma," a name meaning to her, in a different way, of course, just as much as did that of her fair young mother, or even of her father himself.

And when the child had grown into a bigger baby yet, on nights when the winter rain would dash cuttingly against the nursery panes and the wind would lash the great waxy magnolias in the big garden, secure in the sheltering arms of her nurse, she would look dreamily into the roaring wood fire coquetting with its own reflection on the bright brass fender, and so drowse away, while the tender, melodious voice would croon her off to the land of infant dreams with the soothing strains of what she had named in childish fashion *Mauma's Own Do-do Song,* which ran:





Often, after being laid in her snug bed, the child would look through sleep-heavy eyelids at the dark figure with its towering head-handkerchief topping the kindly Negro face,—a face firm of brow, flat of nose, and sincere and gentle of eye,—and as mauma rocked away there by the fire, still humming a snatch of nursery song as if to make the silence companionable, the little creature would wonder if the old woman's head grew into such a peak as the lofty headdress suggested; for never once during all the time of her childhood did she see the old nurse's head uncovered. There were many inexplicable things that the child intended asking mauma as soon as she could talk fluently enough, and that question about the shape of that dark head was one of the most important ones. She was perfectly sure that this old friend of hers knew everything and could tell her all that she wanted to learn; for was there a flower in the garden, a tree on the grounds, a star in the heavens, a bird that swept the sky, a stick or stone

anywhere, about which that black guardian of hers had not woven a tale for her delight?

There was one of these stories that the child always remembered, because it had implanted in her a distaste for mulberries. She used to play sometimes in the servants' yard, after having exhausted the resources of her favorite playground, the garden. Often while mauma, one watchful eye upon her beloved daater, chatted with some of the other servants in the long kitchen building, the child would wonder why the great mulberry tree before her grew so tall that she could never hope to reach one of the ruddy berries upon it. She knew that those berries must be very good to eat, because they were kept 'way out of reach. Something of what was passing through her tiny mind must have shone in the innocent uplifted face one day, for the old nurse came to her suddenly, and drawing a stool up under the shade of the heavy tree, took the small girl on her knee and began:

"Daater, yo mustn't want dem berries, 'cause dey's bad luck berries, blood berries. Lemme tell yo how dat come so, honey. Long time ago dey was a leel gal jes like my daater, only not so good, an' she done look up een de mulberry tree, jes' like yo'se been doin' jes' now, an' a-tinkin' an' a-tinkin' ef she mought only eat some ob dat 'ere fruit. Yo know, een dem days de berries 'pon dat tree was w'ite, py-oh w'ite like de cotton een de boll dat yo done see on de plantation. Now dat leel gal's ma,—jes' de bery sp'it an' image ob yo own sweet ma eese'f,—done fin' out dat dat leel gal hab a way ob disobeyin', so to teach em 'bedience, ee say to dat chile: 'Don' eber tech dem

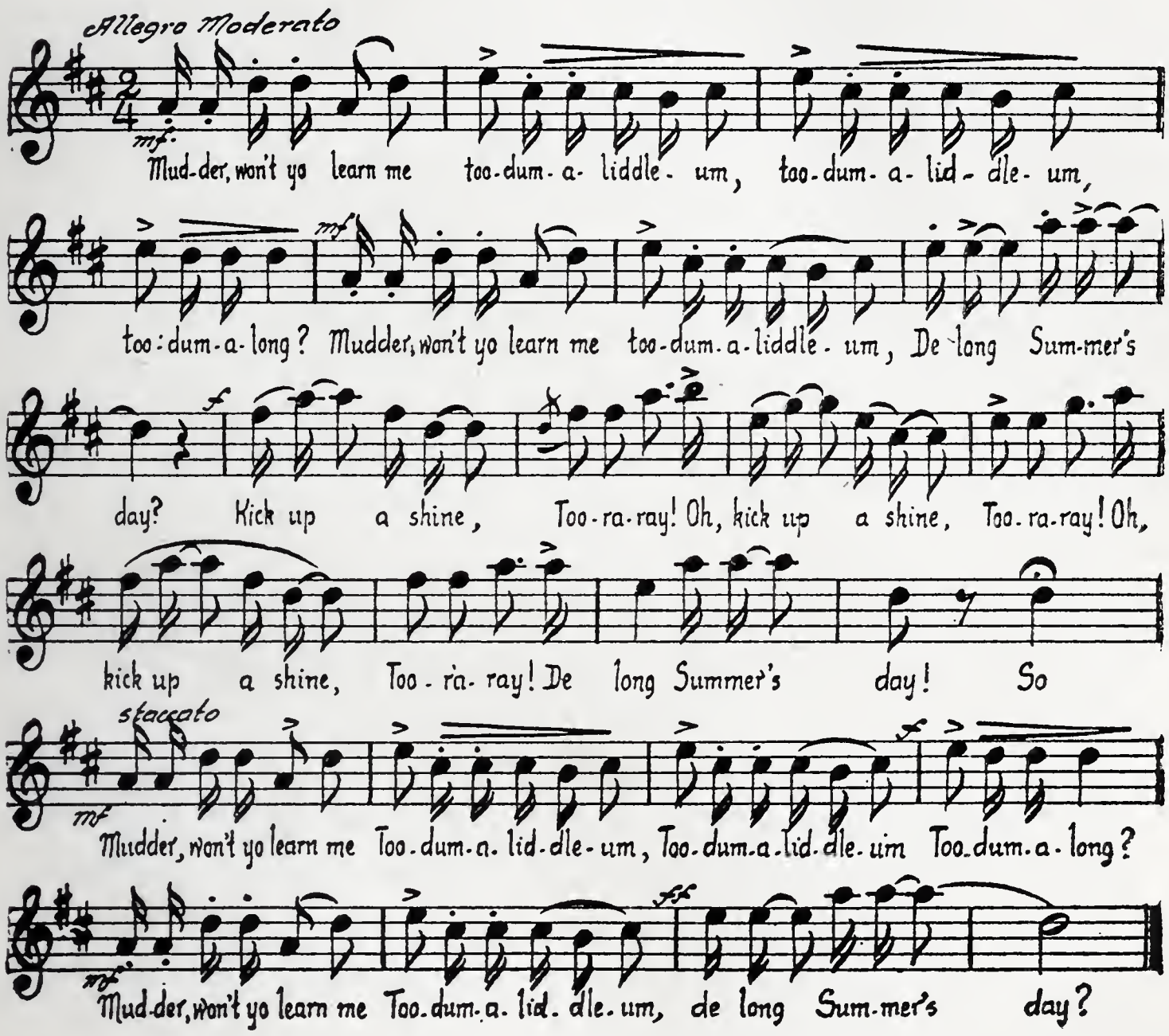
fruit on de mulberry tree, cause sho's yo does do dat I'se gwine know: de tree gwine tell me, an' yo git punish'.' De leel gal t'ink: 'How kin dat be? De tree can' talk.' But ee don' say nuttin.

"One day de leel gal's ma was gone far 'way on a trip, an' de leel gal ee study an' ee study, an' ee say to eese'f: 'Ise gwine git some ob dem nice w'ite berries w'ile ma mudder ees fur away an' can't know nuttin 'tall 'bout eet. I knows ee jes done say dat t'ing so's to scare me.'

"So de leel gal go out to we'y de big tree be, an' ee try fo' climb up dat tree to git some ob de py-oh w'ite berries. But soon's ee begin to climb up, sumpin go 'click' out ob de tree—cause 'twas a voodoo tree, daater—an' ee cut a tweenchy hole een de leel gal's han'. Dat gal try fo' stop de blood dat begin to run; ee try *so* haard fo' stop em. No use. De blood keep a-runnin' from dat chile's han'. De blood run all ober de side of de tree; eet run all ober de groun' 'bout de tree; eet run so fas' dat soon eberyt'ing git red wid de wetness of eet. An' w'en de chile done drap down mos' dead at de foot ob de tree, ee lif' ee eyes; an' wot yo t'ink, daater? All dem pretty w'ite berries done turn red,—red I tell you, daater; an' so dey stays to dis blessed day. So don't yo eber wan' to eat dem berries, ma honey-chile; cause dey's bad luck berries like I jes' done tol' you; blood berries, daater."

And, her story finished, in order to counteract any bad effect of her words on the impressionable child, mauma tossed her up and down a few times in the sweet air, then suddenly began dancing and twirling the small creature

about the yard in a fantastic measure, singing in a high-pitched voice the while:



It was ever so through all those early days: with song and story, with devotion and comprehension, the nursery years were filled. The old nurse understood that childish nature even better than did the young parents, perhaps on account of the very simplicity of her own unsullied soul.

She seemed possessed of but one idea: to keep the little thing healthy and happy. In her opinion, everything else was the concern of the father and mother.

It was mauma who was within call one memorable night when the child awoke from sleep in a fright. "De day ob jedgment," of which she had heard the negroes upon the place speak so often and so learnedly, seemed to have really come; though, had she known it at the time, it was only the lightning striking one of the old magnolias in the garden that had shocked her into wakefulness. And with this bolt, fear had come for the first time into the budding life. Outside in the darkness the lightning was unsheathing its flashing blades, while the heavens roared.

"Mauma, mauma, come here! Daater wants you!" It was so pitiful, dependent, terrified a cry.

"W'y, yere I is, daater!" came the smooth, reassuring voice; and up into the loving brown arms the child was tenderly snatched. Two velvety baby arms clasped themselves tightly about that dusky throat, a scared white cheek was pressed close against that coffee-colored face, as if to borrow courage from the touch, and soon the snowy little night-gowned form was being rocked comfortingly on that never-weary breast. Only when assurance had returned to mauma's small burden did the question come:

"Now, daater, won' yo tell yo' mauma wot's de matter?"

"Oh, I was scared, mauma! I don't like so much light in the dark, and so much noise," returned the now quite tranquil child; though just at the moment a vagrant flash

of lightning made her bury her eyes upon that protecting bosom.

"Well, well, ma honey-chile; ee's dat all? Dey ain' nuttin to scare nobody een dat. Don' yo know wot all dat ees dat been goin' on up dey?"

"No, mauma, no. I don't know, but I don't like it. It's a naughty noise," protested the child.

"Oh, daater, daater!" remonstrated her nurse in tones of as deep condemnation as she could ever find it in her heart to use toward her pet; "yo mustn' say dat, 'cause dat fine splashin' ob light ober de sky come right from de t'rone ob de good Lord above. Lemme 'splain wot mek de lightnin' an' de t'under, honey. Yo see, w'en de floor ob heaven begin to split sometimes, an' de brightness begin' to shine t'rough,—dat's de lightnin', yo know,—de blessed Maaster send de angels wid deir big golden hammers to hammer back de floor tight so dat de sinful mortal don' git dazzle by de heaben-shine. Well, sometimes dem angels knock so haard wid dem hammers dat ee mek de bigges' kind ob a noise, an' dem people dat dinno calls dat noise 't'under.' But yo mauma know de trut' 'bout dat, an' now she done tole daater, an' daater know, too. 'Member, chile, always 'member dat all dat wot been going on out dey am only de angels ob de Lord at wuk, an' yo'll neber be tarrify no mo'."

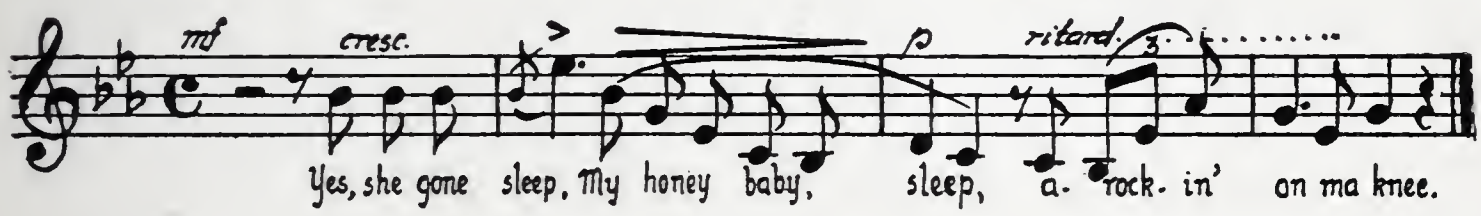
This explanation may not be considered satisfactory from a scientific standpoint, but it was eminently so to the child. It not only calmed her at the time, but it did infinitely more for her; for, from that night on, it seemed that she had been freed from the tyranny of fear forever.

And just as the child trusted implicitly in her mauma's knowledge of all things, so did the child's parents rely upon the old nurse's experience and love and uprightness and simplicity to guard the little one's babyhood. Indeed, so much a queen of the nursery was this old family servant, that her mode of caring for her tiny mistress went without question, and there was only one occasion during the whole of the child's sheltered babyhood on which she remembered her infallible mauma's receiving a reprimand.

It seems that it was the old nurse's habit to use her own judgment as to where to take the little one for change of air of an afternoon. One day, however, she had gone away as usual with her "daater," but when the hour at which she was unfailingly to return had come and gone, a nameless uneasiness and apprehension took possession of the child's mother; an apprehension that was shared by her husband when his daughter's bedtime passed and there was yet no sign of the missing nurse and her charge. Night, hopeless and sad, bent mournfully over the earth, as the anxious mother stood in the desolate light near an open window, for she would not have the gas lighted, feeling that it seemed earlier so, straining her eyes through the moonless dark, knowing that the world would always seem to her like that if anything had happened to her child, and blaming herself for the unquestioning confidence she had always reposed in mauma. Even into the husband's being there entered a doubt as to the wisdom of having left the child so entirely to the old woman who had tended his own childhood so devotedly. The house without the child became intolerable to him; and in a frenzy

of anxiety, he went out into the streets on a despairing hunt for the lost.

It was when he was returning home after nervously wandering about for a while that as he neared his house he became aware of a voice crooning the well-known lullaby:



As the distracted man drew near the singer he saw that the sound came from mauma herself, who was placidly sitting upon a carriage-block of a neighbor's house, rocking herself back and forth, as if in her favorite nursery chair.

"Mauma!" cried the young father. There was anger in his voice, yet relief too. "Mauma, what have you done with the child?"

"Sh—h-h!" whispered the old woman. "Yoo'll wake daater. Yo see, young mawsa, de chile am tired. I done took 'er cross de bay, an' we done miss de las' boat; so I got my sister's boy, Joe,—ee lib ober dey, yo know!—to row us ober. Eet's a long row, an' daater she done gone 'sleep long time, an' I done tote 'er een ma aams, so I'se set down to res'. But don' talk loud an' wake daater."

And she indicated with a motion of her chin the little sleeper in her arms. Over the young one's legs she had thrown her skirt, and about the golden head she had wrapped her snowy neckerchief and apron.

"Well, mauma; what I want to know is why you didn't come right home and relieve our anxiety?"

"Do wot, young mawsa?" And she rose haughtily from her lowly seat; remembering, however, even in her wounded pride at being chided, to guard her "daater's" sleep from interruption. "Sholy dere's no need fo' me to tell yo dat wid *me* daater won't come to no haarm, any mo' dan yo did yose'f w'en yo was a he'pless leel boy." It was intended as a cutting rebuke, but it failed to tell.

"At any rate, there was no excuse for your not coming home as soon as you landed,—at once. You must have felt you had done wrong, because you were afraid to face me."

"Scared!—scared? Wot *me,* mawsa? Hm-m, yo dinno me. I wa'n' born een de woods to be scared by de owls." And the privileged creature, with the carriage of a goddess, bent her steps toward home, bearing in her loving arms the serenely sleeping child.

With a long stride, her master overtook her, anger getting control of him.

"Now, understand one thing, mauma. You have kept my child out in this way for the first and last time. If it should ever occur again, remember that you and I can no longer live in the same house."

Even in the gloom of the night, the young father could decipher the tolerant, pitying look that the old woman bent upon hm,—just such a look as an indulgent mother might give to a favorite, misguided son.

"Bunkum,"—and with that name the years seemed to have fallen away from the master, and in his former

nurse's eyes he was only the little baby again,—"Bunkum, dat's de fust time I eber knowed yo to talk sassy to yo ole mauma een all de time I done nuss yo. Hm-m-m! So yo say ef I do dat agin yo ain't gwine lib een de same house wid me? Well, lemme tell yo sumpin, Bunkum. I'se done lib een dat house long befo' yo was born or so much as t'ought about, an' I ain' neber gwine quit as long as ma haid ees hot,—not quit dat house, not me, sah. So, ef yo won' lib een de same house wid me, wot I'se studyin' is whey yo *is* gwine lib?"

And as she believed that no answer would be possible to this, she went on majestically toward the house that she, in her simple heart, felt she owned. And from that day on mauma continued to hold undisputed sway in the nursery.

It was well that she did; for the time was not far distant when the child was going to borrow strength from her strength, perhaps life itself from the old woman's unwearying watchfulness and care. Because soon illness struck down the little one. How the bed would float and the ceiling swing away from the small girl! And in between times her father and mother would come in and look at her and feel of her anxiously,—of her head, of her hands. And it seemed to the child that her mother was always crying, while her father's careless face had grown strange and drawn and grey. And often another man would come, and he, too, would feel of her little hands and wrists, while through the tiny crack between her eyelids, which hung so heavily together, she could see him writing on a piece of paper, after which she would hear his nice, cool, calm voice

giving directions. Then she was always being made to swallow things that were neither food nor drink; and all the while mauma's voice was crooning on in the same old restful way. And it seemed to the child that she slept long, and it was always night. Then, through her dreams the strange man's voice sounded, saying that none must enter

That strong, soothing touch on the little burning fingers

the room except mauma; that everything must be as quiet as possible; no noise, no excitement. And the child knew, even in her dream, that she was not sorry to be left alone with her nurse, because everybody else seemed so sad; but mauma always sang, sang through the unending black night.

But a time came when mauma's voice ceased sound-

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ing in that long night; another night, it seemed to the child, from the first endless night; a worse night to the little one, for her eyelids would not lift at all. It was as if burning giant hands were holding those lids fast together. And the child cried out; though the sound was really only a breath in the silence:

"Mauma!"

"Yes, daater."

"Give me—your hand."

And instantly, without further word, the child felt the strong, soothing, familiar old touch about her little burning fingers.

"Mauma,"—the labored words came almost soundlessly,—"Mauma—if I go—to sleep, don't let go. I'm so lonely."

"Yes, daater."

There was a long choking silence. Then the soft colored tones came through the stillness:

"Daater; yo see me?"

"No, mauma."

"Try, daater. Fo' yo ole mauma's sake, try. Don' yo see yo' mauma?"

The eyelids fluttered, and after a tremendous pause the tired answer came:

"No—no, mauma."

The little nursery clock ticked those first hours of the night deafeningly and all too fast for that dark watcher there, holding close that frail, feverish hand, as if to keep the little one back from something—something,—she dared not think what.

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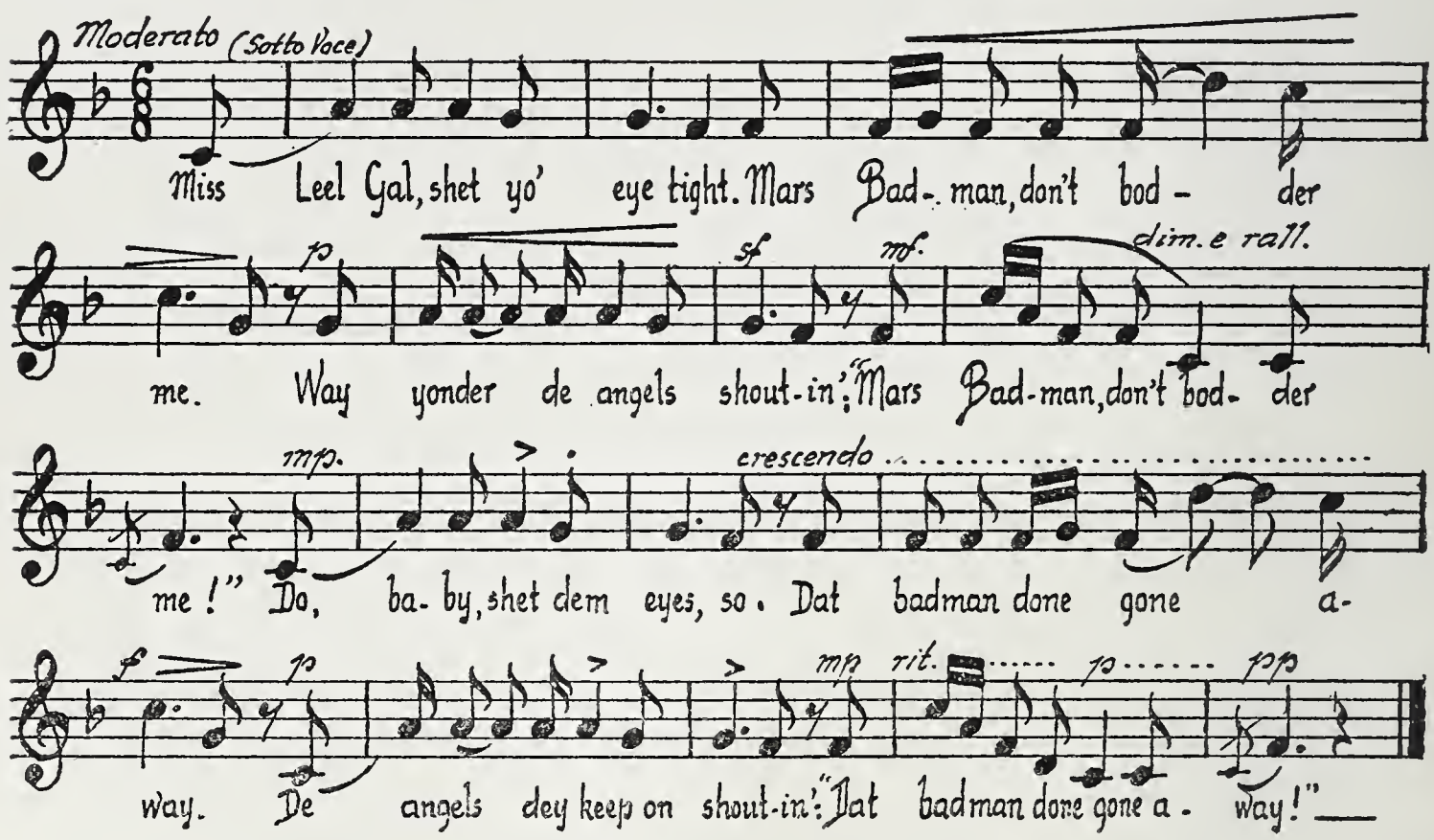
"Mauma," again came the whisper.

"Yes, daater; I'se right yere beside yo, wid yo leel han' een mine." She was bending down to catch the words that came in breaths that burnt her cheek.

"Mauma, why don't you sing me to sleep? Sing *Miss Leel Gal.* And don't let go my hand,—mauma, don't, not even if I go to sleep!"

Obedient to the wish, though the voice was too choked with feeling to utter any more than a husky tone, the faithful nurse began, in notes meant for the attentive child alone:



Hours passed, hours of anguish; but the tireless voice sang on low and comfortingly over and over the same strain,—the same unmeaning words. And when the child opened her cool, unheavy eyelids in the unfamiliar, melan-

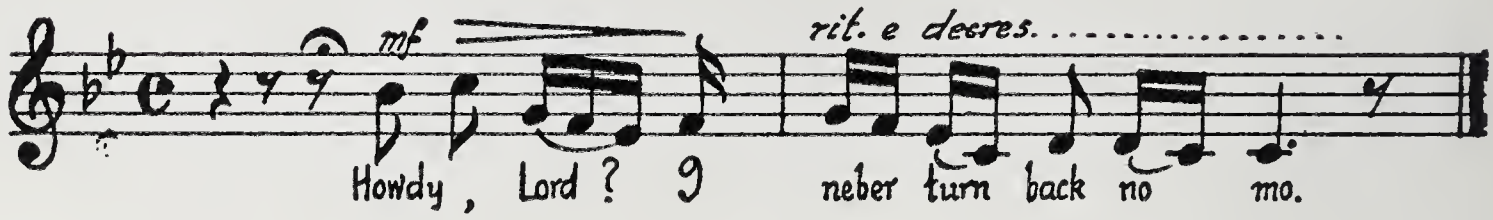
choly grey of the dawn, the song she had asked for was still droning in her ears.

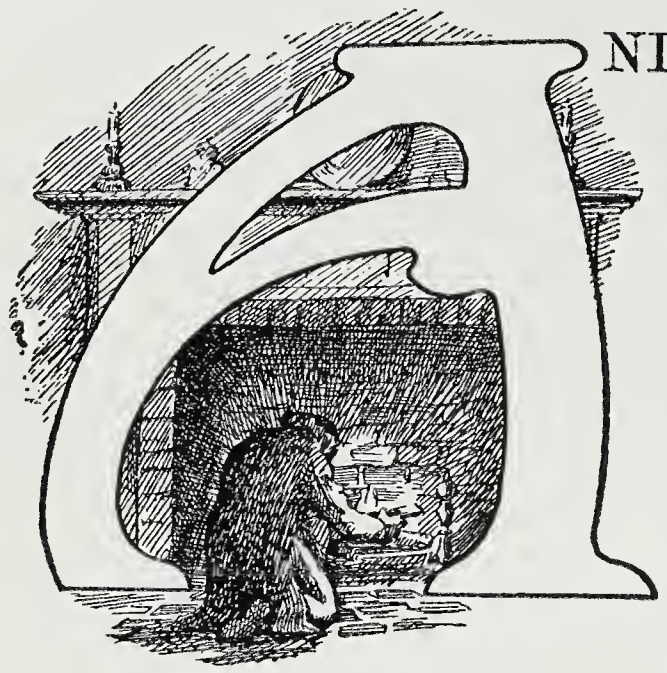
"Mauma," she said, in scarce audible accents, smiling up gratefully into the watch-worn, loving face above her, "I can see you now. And I went to sleep, and you didn't let go my hand, mauma,—you didn't let go! I *knew* you wouldn't."

And, if such a thing were possible, that night added strength to the faith and love and mutual devotion of these two,—the golden-haired child and her old black mauma.

II

ANDREW'S RELIGION





ANDREW was polishing the dining-room grate, preparatory to setting the open fire into a blaze. Over and over again his half-hushed voice would turn the tune, with its seemingly irreverent words to the endless interest of the child.

She was standing near, running over the queer little thoughts that beset her childish brain,—wondering why Andrew's palms were such a nice soft color, like her favorite cookies, while their backs were such a warm brown, darker than the shell of the darkest pecans; wondering why his hair,—white, where it was not altogether missing,—should be twisted into what looked like tiny little springs, while her father's was so straight and brown and silky. But she was too polite to ask him the reason; besides, she thought, it must be all right since they were

On his knees before the fireplace, Andrew had thrown himself into unstudied religious ecstacy

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a part of this old faithful ally of hers. For, next to her beloved mauma, the child had looked upon this "waiting-man," as he was called, as her truest friend ever since her days of infant frocks, when she would crow lustily if carried in those kindly, strong old arms. And, though she was now what she considered a great big girl of eight years, not one bit of his unvarying tenderness for her had slipped her loyal memory.

She remembered how, when her father and mother used to send her off to bed, and when even her slavishly devoted nurse would hasten to carry out the parental command, that good old butler would whisper to her reassurringly: "Dat's all right, leel honey missy; to-morrow I'se gwine mek up fer disher t'ing. I'se sho' gwine tell yo all 'bout Brer Rabbit an' Brer Wolf." And she would at once feel pacified. And again, often when she would long for some of the toothsome dishes made by "Cooky" to tickle adult palates, and would be reminded that once a small girl became an angel from eating thereof, Andrew's eyes would mark the disappointment on the little face at being denied these dainties, and when she had perhaps been sent in disgrace to the nursery for having shed tears because she could not have these goodies, he would sneak in slyly, knowing she was alone, with a plate laden with the forbidden fruit. Then would she lawlessly eat, and afterwards be as happily sick as any child of the most precocious gastronomic tastes could possibly care to be.

All these kindnesses,—questionable perhaps,—had tended to attach her to Andrew; and so, often in the mornings it was her habit, after mauma had dressed her, to

follow him before breakfast through the lower floor of the still sleeping house as he went about his duties.

"Andrew," the child suddenly said to the servant kneeling there before the hearth. She got in the words just as he was on the point of commencing his song for the twentieth time at least, always keeping time with his active polishing-brush. "Andrew, have you ever been to Heaven?"

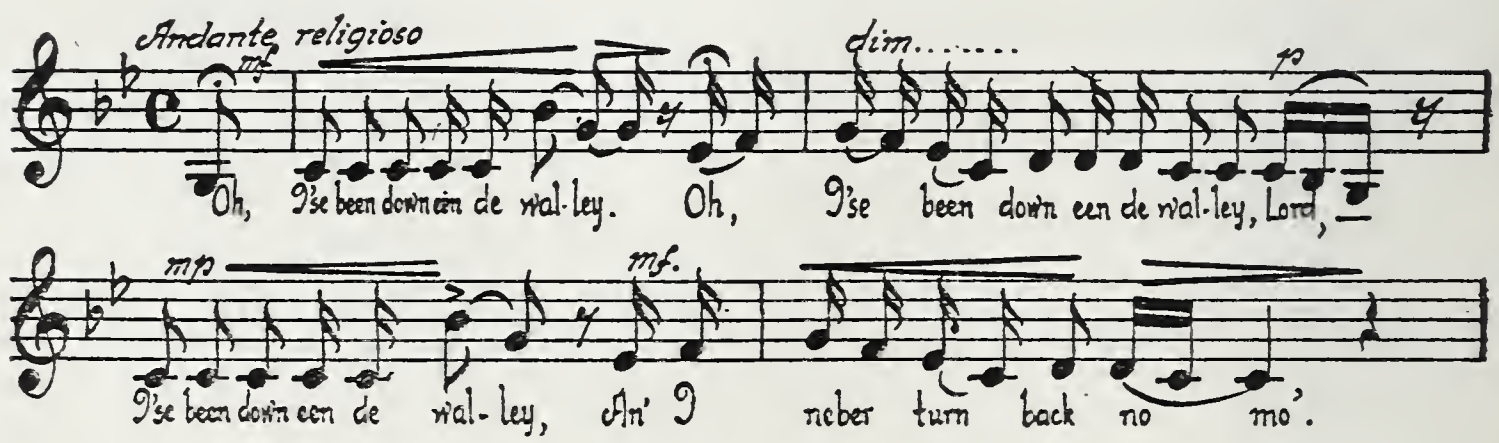
The old servant rolled his black eyes wonderingly around at the child, asking, as if he had not quite understood the tremendous question:

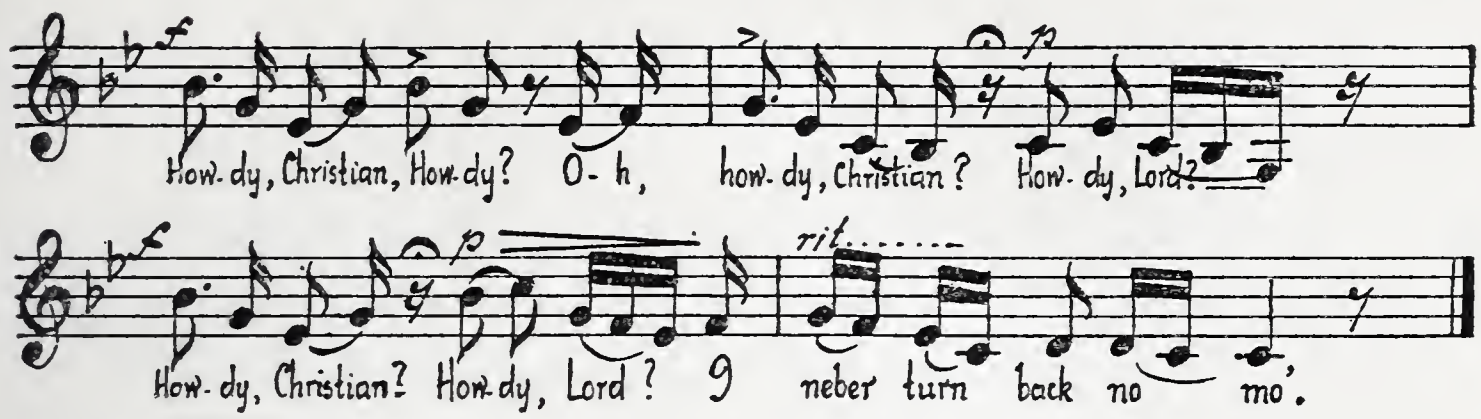
"Wot, me, leel missy? Wuffer yo t'ink dat, chile?"

"Why, that song you're singing. You say 'I'se been down een de walley,' "—she repeated the old man's pronunciation as if it were the most proper thing in the world —"and I thought that must be Heaven, 'cause you say 'Howdy, Lord!' as if you had seen Him."

"Dat's so, chile, sho' nuff,—dat's so. But lemme study how dat'er song done go."

And low, through the early morning quiet of the house, droned again the tremulous, reverent sounds that for so many minutes past had filled the silence:





Still on his knees before the now bright fireplace, Andrew had thrown himself into unstudied religious ecstacy. With tight-shut lids and swaying form, with idle hands and contrite voice, the first words had come out full of the soft melancholy of a soul mournful with sincere repentance. But when he came to the words "Howd'y, Christian, howd'y?" there was all the ring of a joyful greeting in the expressive voice, which sank again into an awed whisper, so constrained yet so happy, as the commonplace expression "Howd'y, Lord?" came full of meaning over the thick brown lips.

The music ceased; the eyes opened, and rising rustily from his knees, the singer said with a sort of exaltation quite foreign to the methodical manner in which he collected his polish and brushes and cloths:

"Oh, leel missy, Andrew sholy do lub heems! Dey mek eem feel as dough de Lord was a-hangin' ob de snow-w'ite robe ob de purifiction on ee po' black pusson. Does yo' know, honey, dat bimeby de Lord gwine do dat t'ing? An' w'en de Lord done do eet, Andrew soul ee gwine git jes' as w'ite as yo own skin. Now, mebbe yo don't beliebe dat, honey-chile; but eet's so. Dey's one place een de Book, —I speck eet's een de place whey Paul p'ints ee pistol at

de Romans,—whey de Lord say dat Andrew shall be w'iter'n de snow,—yes' w'iter'n de snow. Does you min' dat, honey?"

A shadow of consternation darkened the child's countenance as she gazed up into the deep brown face beaming so earnestly down at her with still that look of exaltation upon it. Was her world suddenly becoming topsy-turvy? If Andrew,—her Andrew, with the walnut skin and variegated hands and kinky hair,—were going to turn white in the hereafter, how would she ever know him in that Heaven of which he was always talking to her? Some inward whisper seemed to tell the darky something of what was flashing through the little one's distressed head, for he smiled reassuringly at her, and with a kindly effort at diversion, he went on:

"Yes, honey; yo see disher ole black skin? Well, ee gwine tu'n w'ite, jes' like my Heabenly Maaster mean' em fo' be. Yo know 'bout dat, ainty?—how dat accident done happen wot make de po' nigger black?"

And he had not to wait a breath for the child's ready reply:

"No, Andrew, I've never heard it. But I do want to know. Do tell me 'bout it."

She was ever eager for one of her dusky friend's tales, of which he seemed to have one for every occasion.

"Well, lemme 'splain to yo, chile. Yo see, honey, de worl' done begin to thin out, an' de Lord Ee study, an' Ee study, an' Ee say to Ese'f: 'Reckon eet come time to mek mo folks.' So Ee put up de bone frames ob de mens, an' Ee buil' de meat 'pon top de bones, but w'en Ee come to

de skin, Ee hab fo' stop. *Dere* was de mens, but no skin to ee bones. De Lord hab run out ob skin. So Ee done sen' one ob de mens wid no skin to ee bones on a arran' to de sto' whey dey keeps de wite skin up een Heaben, to buy some. But dat man was lazy, an' ee t'ink dat de sto'

Her baby font of spiritual wisdom

dat de Lord done sen' 'im to was too fur. So dat man stop at de fust sto' dat ee come to, an' ee say to de man hin' de counter: 'Gimme a passel ob skin'. An' ee go back to de Lord wid de bun'le. But w'en de Lord done open de passel, an' see dat black skin, Ee know dat de man not heed Ee order, an' dat ee done gone to de wrong sto', 'cause ee was too lazy to go furrer. So de Lord in anger clap all de black skin on dat one man, an' Ee say: 'Dere now! Cause yo'se so good-fo-nuttin, yo'se gwine to wuk by de sweat ob yo' forehead, yose'f an' yo' chillun an' yo' chillun's chillun, an' slabe an' obey from now tell de Jedg-

ment Day,—jes a good-fo-nuttin nigger, dat's all, tell yo come to jedgment.' An' dat's how come we all's black, leel missy; all on de count ob one lazy critter."

It was the first time one of Andrew's little fables had failed to please the child. The uncertainty of recognizing him on the farther shore was still distressing her; for the information concerning his to-be-acquired whiteness had come to her in the nature of a startling revelation. With a little pucker between her lightly traced brows, she looked quizzically after her companion, who was leaving the room, —her mind very troubled.

"O Andrew, come back; I want to ask you something."

"Turreckly, turreckly, missy. I'se comin' right back to set de breckfus' table," came the answer to the beat of his departing feet.

While the child was debating with herself whether to rush after the old Negro with her question or to wait until his return, he came back and set about, with deft fingers, preparing the table for breakfast. Yet, she hardly knew how to frame her thought until the snowy cloth was being placed over the polished mahogany board, suggesting to her the change of color that the two had recently been discussing. Indeed, the spreading of that fair cloth was so very like a demonstration to the small girl that she closed her eyelids quickly, as if to shut out the sight. But after a while she asked curiously:

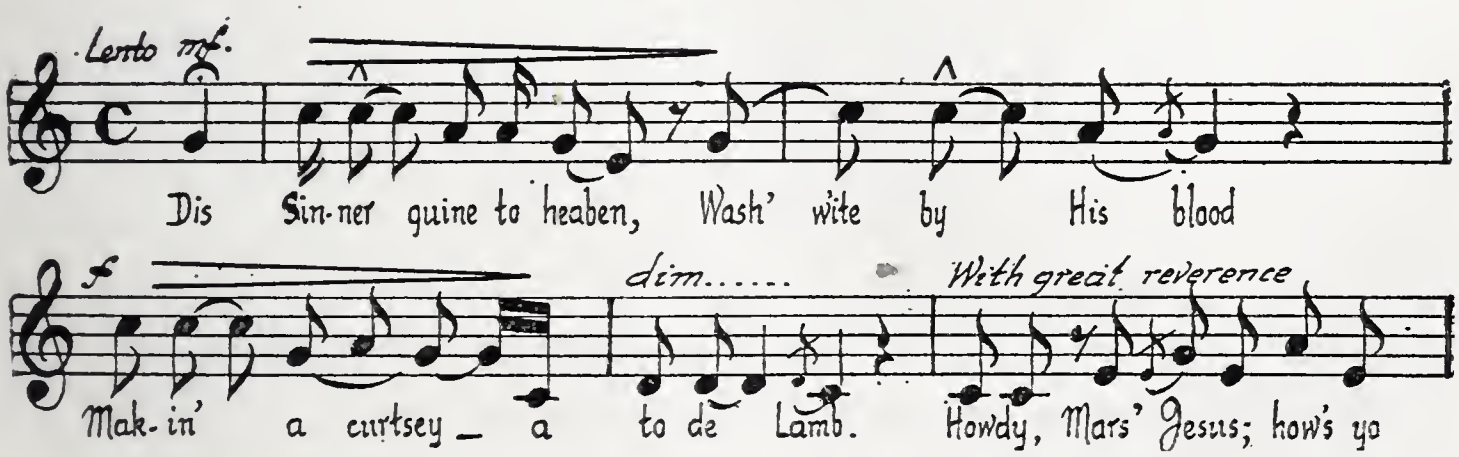
"Will it be just like that, Andrew? Will the Lord just spread the white skin over your own?"

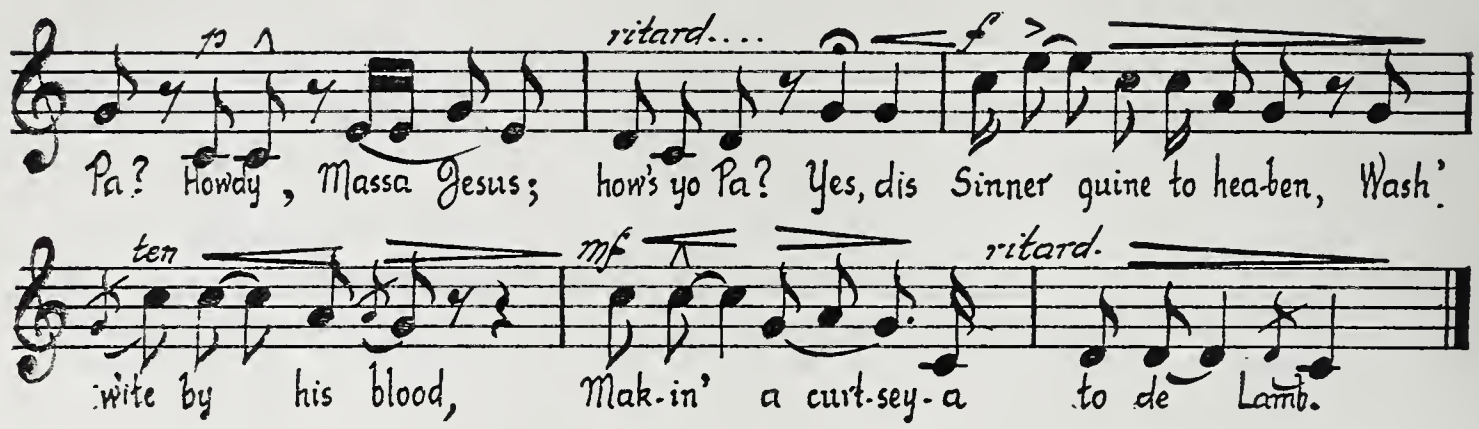
The busy dark fingers, never stopping a moment in

their skilful preparation of the table, the serving-man proceeded to expound religion, with that sage look on his patriarchal face:

"W'y, no, honey; not zackly. We's gwine be mek py-oh like de snow, eenside an' out,—eenside an' out. Yo see, w'en my Heabenly Faader done sen' Ee Son down here, dis worl' was pow'ful bad. Dem mens wot haben't black skin, dey hab black haart. So de Lord say: 'De blood ob de Lamb mus' be spill'; an' dat gwine mek de whole eart's haart w'ite once mo'. Everyt'ing gwine be w'ite eenside; but de po' nigger's skin mus' stay black to wait fo' de Jedgment Day, like I done say befo'. 'Sides, eet was only de haarts Ee was w'itenin' den. So dat's how come de Lord wash' de w'ite man's haart w'en dey done crucidify my Sabior. An' dat's how come de nigger mus' wait on,—black,—tell ee meet ee Lord een glory. An' dat's all po Andrew lib fo'; ee jes lib fo' to die, an' den be w'ite fo-eber. Eet's all jess like dis heem done say, missy."

And with an incongruous material glance of artistic appreciation at the now gleaming breakfast-table, which was almost ready for the approaching meal, he sent forth his devout voice in religious song:





As the melody was in progress, a rush of tears came to the child's eyes. Time and again she had heard the same tune sung without ever attaching any special meaning to the seemingly senseless words; but now they appeared to be telling her of the overturning of what she considered her perfect world. She tried to avert her tear-filled eyes when the silence fell again upon the room, but the gentle-hearted waiting-man had seen the saddened look and understood it. With the tenderest consideration for the child, he tried to make all the amends in his weak power for having cast even a momentary cloud over that loved young life.

"W'y, honey-lamb; don' yo want Andrew fo' be w'ite?" he asked yearningly.

"I don't know. I never saw you that way,—an' I'm 'fraid—I'm 'fraid I won't know you when I meet you up in Heaven." She was genuinely distressed as well as puzzled.

"Ck, ck, ck!" chirped the sympathetic soul, pityingly. "Dat's so, chile; prably you moughtn't." He paused perplexedly before a light seemed to break upon him, and in its first flash he went on, with his soft voice full of promise:

"Well den; I tell yo wot yo do, leel missy: w'en de time done come fo' yo to come eento de golden gates,—ef so be po' sinful ole Andrew been let een fust,—w'en yo come a-knockin' at de do' an' dey lets yo eento de light,—'cause, co'se dey'll let een a leel lamb like you,—yo mus' call out 'Andrew, yere I is. I'se come!" Den 'way off from de fiel' whey 'ee's workin', Andrew'll come a-runnin', 'cause ee hear ee leel missy's voice. An' den I'll say, 'Yere I is, honey!' so yo'll know me howsomeber be de color ob my skin. An' ef de w'iteness ob me mek yo feel dat Andrew ain' Andrew no mo', den I'll go straight up to my Maaster on ee big w'ite t'rone, an' say, 'Lord, I'se so glad to be een Heaben,—so glad!—but 'scuse me, Lord, I'se so sorry dat yo tu'n me w'ite. So please, Lord, mek me a nigger again, an' do let me stay de only black t'ing een dis snowy white place; please, please, good Lord, do dis, jes to please my leel missy; 'cause Heaben ain' Heaben ef my honey-chile dunno her ole Andrew.' "

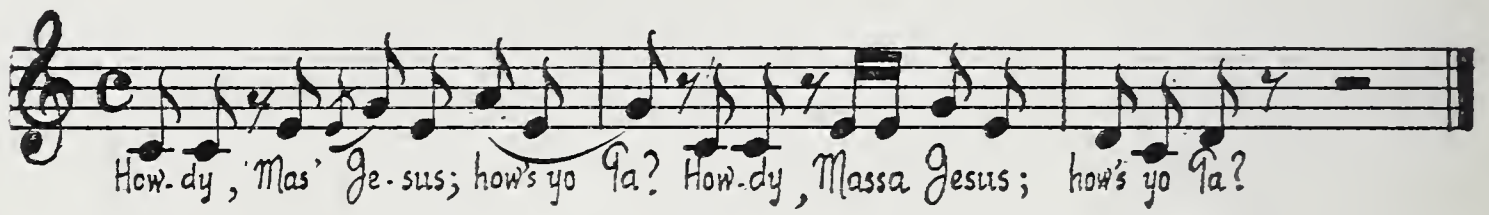
The tear-filled eyes of the little girl had grown smiling as the old man went on, and at the end she clapped her small hands, gleefully crying out as she did so:

"Oh, Andrew, I knew you'd do anything for me, but I didn't know you'd stay black always,—here and in Heaven. And, oh, I'm so glad!—so glad!—'cause I don't know what I'd do without you, and you wouldn't be you if they changed your color. But listen! I hear papa on the stairs, coming down."

And with a grateful look at the old servant, the child darted away, in a gale of spirits now that her universe was once again firmly set upon its foundations, and the

question of Andrew's color was settled in her mind for time and all eternity.

"An', a leetle chile shall lead 'em,—a leetle chile," murmured the darky dreamily, nodding his head in self-communion while his devoted eyes followed the light, dancing figure of his tiny mistress as she sped away to get her parent's morning kiss, her gladsome trilling tongue and shrill baby throat sending forth a fragment of that Negro melody, with its mixture of reverence and absurdity, of simplicity and pathos:



"Watermillions goin' by! Mek up yo' min' befo' I pass by"

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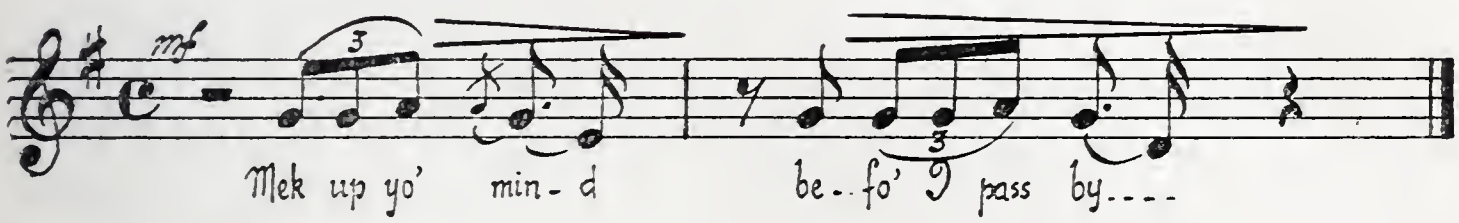
III

A DUSKY WOOING

FAR down the street, that quivered in the intensity of the forenoon sun, sounded the familiar tenor cry of the vendor,—only fragments of his musical plea to buy reaching the ears indoors. With mellow, persuasive phrasing, his melodious call now melted into entreaty, now rang sonorous with monition:

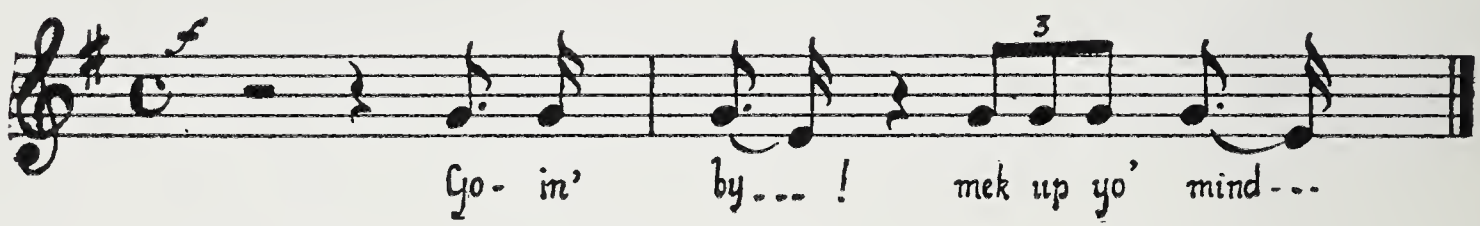


Clarinda, the housemaid of bituminous hue, pricked up her ears with a start; even the unobserving child, arranging her toys, noticed that. At the moment Clarinda was changing the pillow-cases of the nursery bed. As the mellow voice floated in on the deep-scented summer morning air, she stood stock still. Two corners of the square of linen were held open in her coffee-colored hands, while be-

tween her dazzling teeth,—as flawless in their perfection as a row of milky grains upon an ear of early corn,—a pillow was hanging ready to be dropped into its receptacle. Above it all rose her brown young face, the eyes uplifted to the ceiling as if invoking inspiration or advice from its unresponsive blankness.

Suddenly, with a long-drawn breath, the girl came down from her height of meditation as one who has reached an important decision, loosened her dental hold upon her burden, clothed the pillow and placed it, with exaggerated care as to its correct position, and with many precautionary pats, on the little bed.

Again a fragment of tenor song floated in to her,—nearer this time:



Someone must have been persuaded by the tuneful vendor, for the street cry broke itself off short, and as it did so, Clarinda, with that conscious titter that passes for what would be a blush in one of fairer complexion, asked coyly of the playing child:

"Does yo hear dat, honey? Now I wonders who dat kin be!"

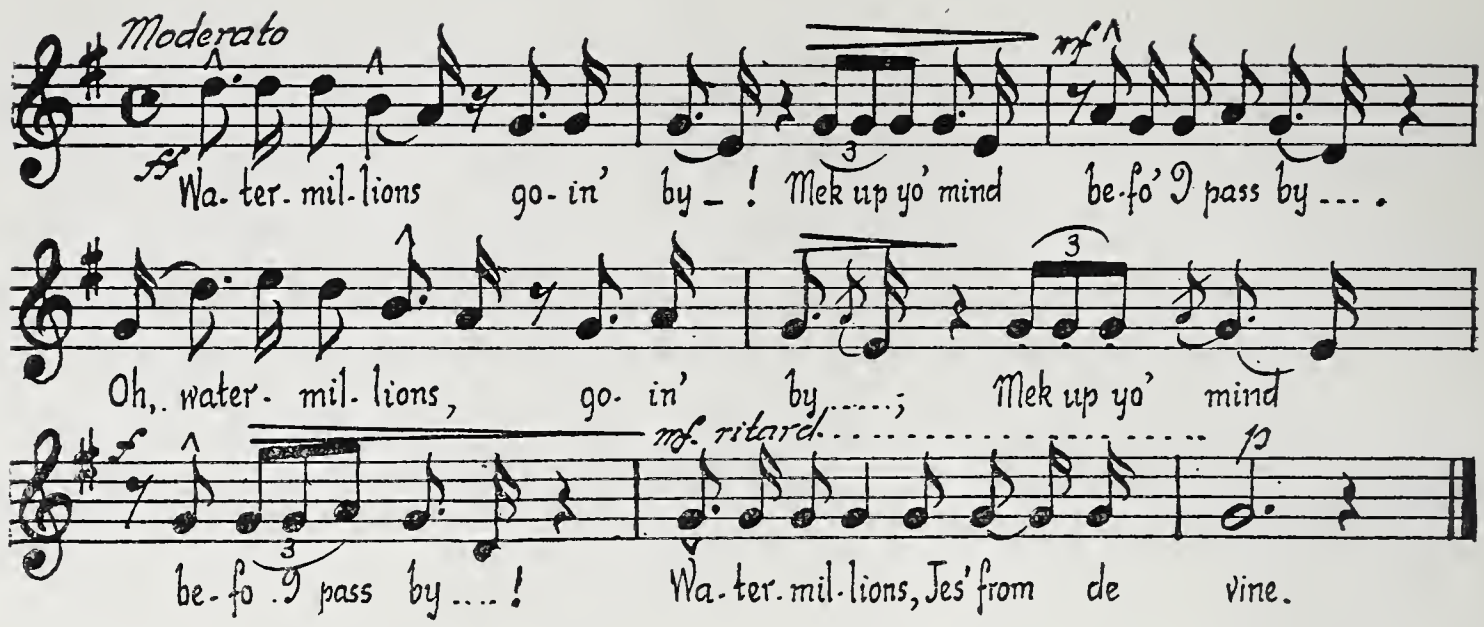
"Why, don't you know, Clarinda?" returned the child, innocently incisive. "I thought everybody knew old Joe's voice,—old Joe, the watermelon man, you know."

"Tubby sho,—tubby sho', 'tis. But sholy yo don' t'ink ee's ole jes' 'cause ee done mek a cullud gemman by Mr. Linkum 'way back day w'en ee was only a tweenchy boy? Lemme tell yo 'bout dat Joe, chile. Ee's a 'ristocrat, dat Joe Mountjoy,—dat's ee name!—a 'ristocrat t'rough an' t'rough. Ee say ee hab ee own business, an' ee ain' neber wuk fo' buckra sence freedom, an' ee so chuck-full ob swanger dat ee mek me feel lak I don' wan' hab nuttin 'tall to do wid em,—nuttin 'tall."

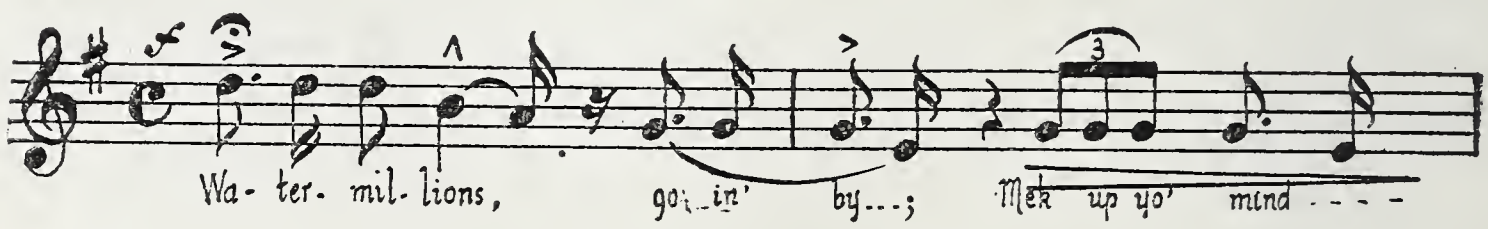
When Clarinda said "buckra" she meant "white people," when she said "swanger" she intended to convey the fact that the individual to whom she referred was of a haughty and overbearing nature. Provided her hearer were unfamiliar with her phraseology, with its frequent lapses into expressions picturesque rather than familiar to the ordinary English-speaking public, it would have required several references to a Gullah-English dictionary (if such a tome existed) to render successful even a short conversation with the girl.

"Ee-yah! ee-yah! ee-yah!" she giggled, confidentially continuing her explanation to the half-attentive child; "dat man done gone clean boozy ober dis gal,—jes clean boozy. Yistidday ee gimme de bigges' watermillion ee got; an' now, jes' haark how ee shout so's I kin know ee's a trampoosin' t'rough dis street."

And, true enough, with unmistakable and unnecessary emphasis came the cry, fortissimo:



The voice and its owner had now come to the very back gate of the child's grounds; but Clarinda, with a consciously unconscious air, was brushing out the mosquito-net over the bed,—"de pawilion" is what she would have called that gauzy guard against the tuneful insects. The maid was standing as if suddenly stricken deaf; but through the tail of her eye she was peeping surreptitiously through a long French window, across the upper piazza, and over the garden to where, just within the back gate under the shady mulberry tree, stood her sable suitor holding aloft in tempting wise his offering of watermelons, and shouting lustily and alluringly the while:



"Tee-hee!" sniggered the girl to the now wholly inattentive child. "Whuffer dat nigger mek sich a show ob

eese'f befo' de whole yaard, I wants to know? I'se jes' gwine down, missy, to tell em fo' quit dem connudlin' tricks, onless ee want me fo' 'sult 'em.''

And, duties forgot, down the many stairs and over the long walks, where the sun played hide and seek among the bushes, sped the light-footed Clarinda until she reached the patient figure beneath the mulberry tree. It would have appeared that it was her intention to chide her bold lover for thus making a spectacle of himself and divulging the secret of his heart to possible scoffers; but when she reached Joe, standing there in the throes of uncertainty as to his welcome, the temptation was irresistible. Two shapely half-bare brown arms reached out unreservedly to receive into their embrace the enamored man's offering,—the finest melon in his stock.

''Dat sho' ees a largeen melon, Joe. Does yo t'ink eet's ripe an' sweet?'' she asked, as if to make conversation.

Boldly, in stentorian tones heard by anyone within a hundred yards, the man returned:

''Sweet, yo say, Clarinda? Go 'long, gal. Does yo t'ink it could be udder dan sweet ef eet's fo' you. But jes' to mek sho' eet's ripe——''

He cut his speech off short, and taking the burdensome fruit from the girl's arms, he lifted it to the top of his head. While it rested there he clasped his hands about the melon's waist and squeezed it tightly, whereupon it emitted a crisp, cracking sound.

''How's dat?'' he asked with assurance, handing the melon back to his sweetheart.

She shook her shapely head nonchalantly. "Oh, I reckon dat'll do," were the only words of thanks that came over her lips; but a glimpse of a dazzling smile as the sable

He took the burdensome fruit from the girl's arms

maid started to move away bewildered and allured the man.

"Don' go jes' yet, Clarinda," he besought loudly. "I'se got sumpin' fo' ax yo."

" 'S if any looney pusson dinno wot dat ees," she scoffed unblushingly.

"Well, be dat so or no, wot I wants to know ees: when you gwine marry me, Clarinda?" And he laid his hand

detainingly on the firm black arm. But the girl started coquettishly away.

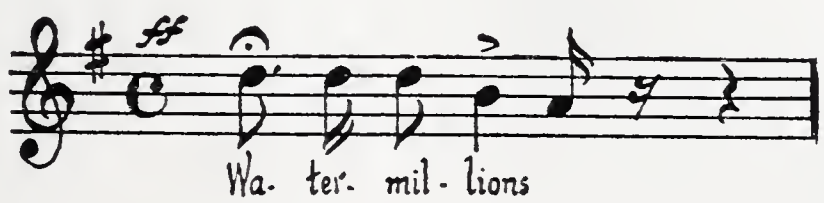
"Han's off,—han's off!" she cried peremptorily. "How does yo know but wot I'se forbidden fruit?"

"Dat's all py-oh foolishness, gal. Yo'se got too much mudder-wit not fo' know dat I'se a good one fo' marry. I'se got ma own house, I'se got ma own cyart, an' ma own horse, an' ma own melons een season, an' yo'd sho' move een de upper succles wid me for yo man. Yo bes' marry me, Clarinda."

The voice was far from pleading. Indeed, no one would have believed from the practical statement that the man's feelings were in the least involved; and the girl herself seemed to resent the businesslike tone, for she drew herself up proudly and answered with what passed for "back-sass" in the world in which she moved:

"Look yere, man; does yo take me fo' stale fruit on de stan'?"

And glaring angrily at him out of her blazing black eyes, she strode away from the trysting-place under the mulberry tree, carrying, as if absent-mindedly, Joe's love-offering clasped firmly in her arms. The colored man's eyes followed her, and his voice would have followed too in pleading for her return; but, suddenly remembering his neglected load of watermelons outside, he stepped quickly through the gate and soon his cry,



sounded above the somnolent summer silence of the street.

But in spite of Clarinda's apparent flouting of her suitor on that early summer day, morning after morning throughout the season found her eagerly awaiting the first note of his business song. Fleetly running, she was always there for a few moments under the shade of the mulberry tree, to chat and to receive his daily gift of her favorite fruit.

"Clarinda," said Joe one morning. The summer was ripe now and the days had come when the earth fairly reeled in the embrace of the sun. "Clarinda, wot meks yo ack so? I'se a swanger pusson, an' don't tek 'no' fo' a answer. But yo don' say 'no,' an' yo don' say 'yes.' Yo jes' keeps me at a puffeck stan'still. Now yo's got to tell me. When yo gwine marry me, gal? Now, answer me!"

Clarinda laughed mockingly and merrily and long. Then she looked lingeringly at the latest melon offering that was burdening her strong young arms with its juicy heaviness. Words seemed to be stumbling to her pouting lips; but they tripped themselves up, evidently, for all at once she looked down coyly, and nothing was said for a while.

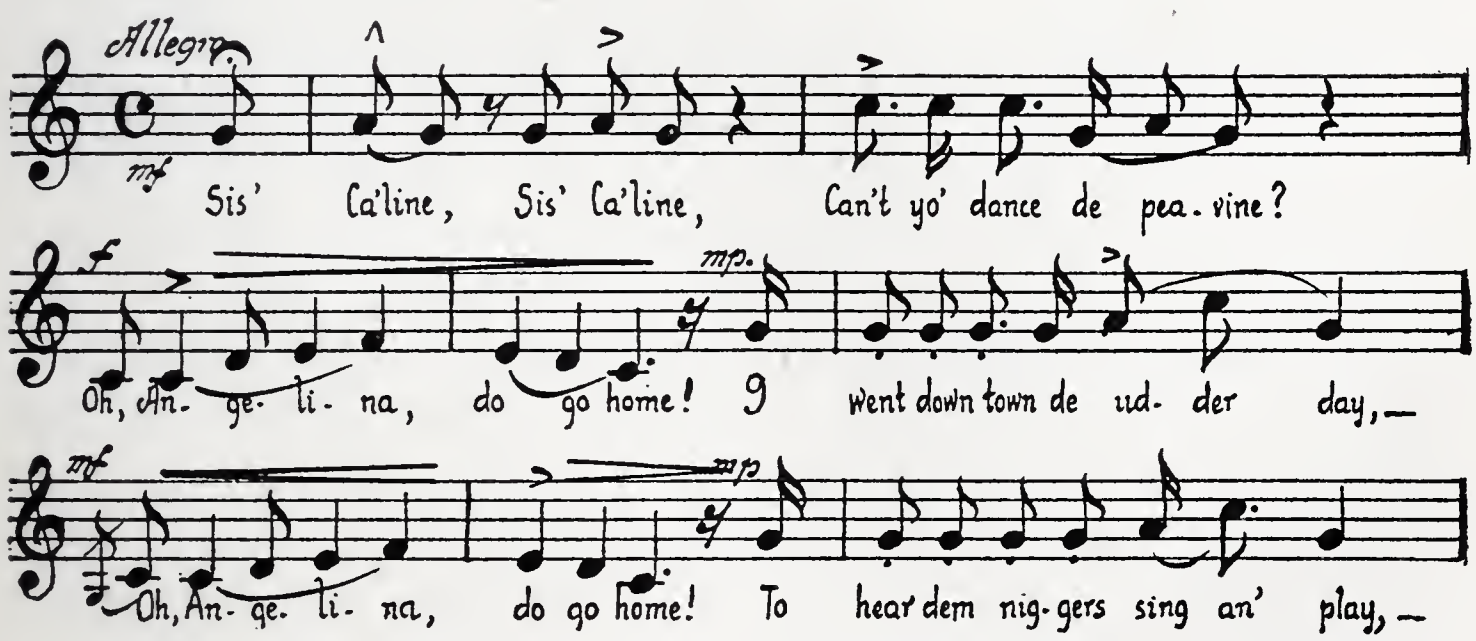
Encouraged by her seeming embarrassment at his imperious proposal, Joe went on:

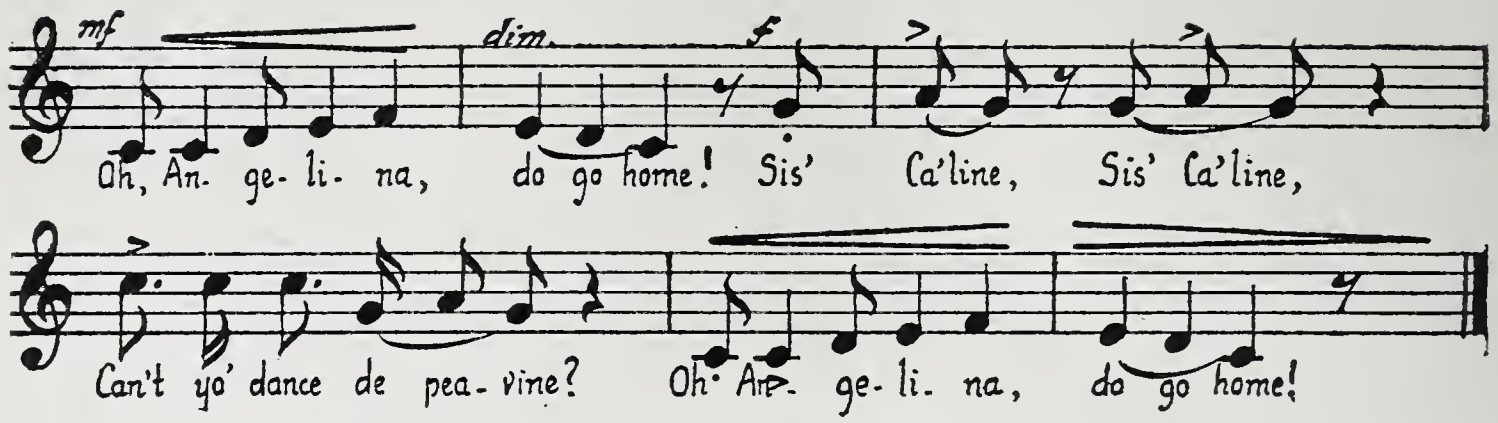
"Yo won' answer me; an' yere I'se been axin' you de same question fo' mont's an' mont's. Well, lemme tell yo sumpin', gal, an' eet's de las' time: De watermillion season am nearly ober, an' ef yo' don' say 'yes' befo' dat time come, yo' don't marry me 'tall,—'tall! Yo' hear dat? Now, eet's at yo' own oction!"

Clarinda's eyes snapped at the threat, but she kept her peace and walked off in silence with her trophy, committing herself to nothing.

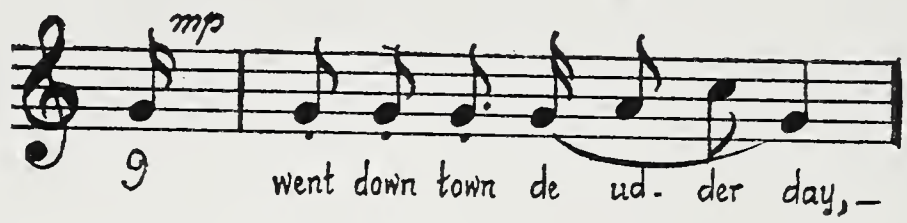
That night there was much noisy merriment out in the servants' yard, for the colored people felt that they could be as unrestrained as they pleased, because the "great house" had long been closed for the Summer, the child's family having gone away for the hot weather. Clarinda was giving one of her famous watermelon festivals to a few chosen friends.

Old Joe, the watermelon man (who made these social events possible to Clarinda), chancing to pass by the back gate, paused under the starlight as he heard the gay group beneath the mulberry tree singing with unrestraint. Now, Joe considered himself a "knowser" of music, and so he bent his ear critically to the intonations of the song as it came out to him:

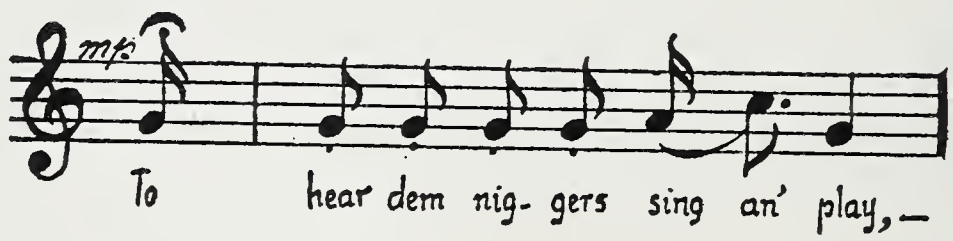




The unseen listener's head nodded approvingly at the parts sung in unison, but two condemning lines cut deep above his outspread nose when he heard the tones of a fresh, daring young male throat that sent forth the tenor solo:



And, then, again, at the passage:



the dusky eavesdropper emitted a grunt of scorn.

Suddenly, guided by he knew not what prompting, Joe quietly opened the heavy gate and stepped unbidden into the circle about the great tree. Clarinda was the first to catch sight of him.

"Well, ef dere ain' Joe!" she announced with an air of bravado and a gust of her gleeful laughter. "An' jes'

een time to git de las' piece ob ee own watermillion. Eet's sho do fines' one yo done gimme yet, Joe. Won' yo hab a tas'e?" she asked insinuatingly.

But Joe would have none of her proffered hospitality. Drawing the girl commandingly aside from the rest, he said earnestly:

"I done tol' yo dis blessed mornin' dat I ain' gwine stan' any mo' o' yo shilly-shallyin'. Yo done treat me too sebasetuous already, gal. De watermillion season am mos' done gone now. Yo's got to tell me dis minute: Is yo gwine marry me, or no?"

"We-e-el," drawled the girl, looking her suitor brazenly in the eye, "sence de watermillions am mos' ober, I don' mind tellin' yo', Joe, dat I'se gwine marry—no; not you, man!"—for her companion had given a peculiar, indescribable start,—"I'se done promise' long time to marry dat yallo' young man settin' right ober dey. Ee's from Virginny, an' ee's a waiter at de big hotel. An' I mus' tell yo, Joe, dat ee say dat de millions yo done gimme dis summer am 'way 'head ob dose dat de w'ite folks eats at de hotel. 'Course yo won' gimme any mo' millions now, an' I'se sorry fo' dat, but I mus' say eet's 'no,' Joe."

The heartless girl started to flee, half-frightened at the possible result of her words; but a glad burst of low laughter from her sable suitor stayed her flying feet. She had looked for reproach, abuse perhaps, and Joe was actually laughing; his merriment getting beyond his control for several seconds. Even when he tried to speak, his voice was still cracked with irrepressible chuckles.

"Oh, gal, wait a minute! Say dat again,—*do* say dat

again; 'cause yo dinno wot yo'se sayin'! I t'ought sho yo'd ack impredudelent 'bout wot I done had een ma min' to tell you tomorrow. Yo see, dere's Cynthy,—Mis. Hunter's cook, een de nex' street. Well, I'se been axin' er de same t'ing I'se been axin' yo all summer, t'inkin' I mek sho ob gittin' a wife dis melon season, ef I done hab two ob yo on de string, an' one ob yo been foolin'. Dis mornin' w'en I done leabe yo, yo was bexed; so I done gone straight 'roun' to Cynthy, an' she done tol' me dat she gwine marry me any time I say. Ha, ha, ha! I sho did trimmble w'en I 'gin to t'ink ob tellin' yo dat I don' wan' yo no mo'. I t'ought yo mought run 'roun' an' tell Cynthy sumpin', an' dat gal got de debbil's own temper. Clarinda, I'se gwine bring yo de fines' million yet tomorrow mornin' fo' disher t'ing. I will, sho. An' don' I tank de Lord, dough, dat I done come by dat gate dis blessed night an' hear' yo all singing' *Sis Ca'line?*"

"Oh, t'ank yo', Miss Marie; t'ank yo' kindly," she cried gratefully, almost fondling the stuff

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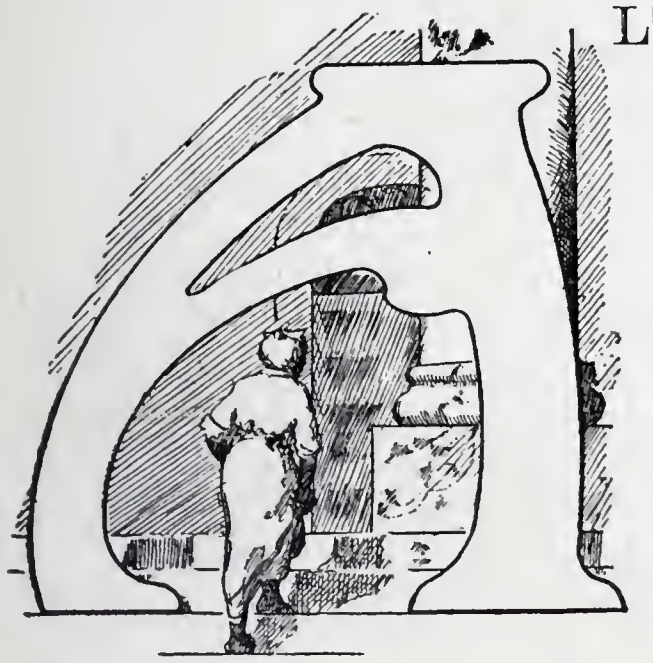
IV

A PIECE OF OLD LACE



ALTHOUGH nothing seemed to be able to conquer the singing instinct in the colored race, there was one dusky individual connected with the child's household whose lips were dumb of song. That was Lydia, her mother's body-servant.

That sad-eyed maid would move lightly and silently about her duties, to the amazement of the child, who was accustomed to the performance of tasks to the accompaniment of monotonous crooning, which would often burst out into unrestrained, merry song. Uncomprehending, the child used to watch Lydia, at first with that awe which anything unfamiliar inspires in the young, then with interest, and finally there grew up in the little thing's heart a vague sense of tenderness and protection and sympathy for this sole sad member of what she had ever found a light-hearted race. It was a totally different feeling from that which she entertained towards any of her other "black friends," as she called them. It was she who

was always expecting to rule the others and yet be loved and shielded from harm and understood by them; but when it came to Lydia, she found this feeling reversed. Not that the maid was not always tender in her treatment of the child; it was only that she seemed a being apart, with that unobstrusive melancholy that built an invisible wall between her and the rest of her fun-loving race.

"Mamma," asked the child with solemn curiosity of her mother one day, "was Lydia always like that? Didn't she ever laugh and dance like Clarinda and sing like mauma and Andrew? Were her eyes always quiet like that?"

The mother looked down into the questioning little face of the little girl seated there on the low stool at her feet, in one of their rare times of intimacy and confidence. It was unusual for the child to ask thoughtful questions, and the mother found herself wondering if the little creature were getting old enough to understand something of the tragedies of life.

"Dearest," she answered at length, "Lydia was always a gentle creature, never very merry, seldom laughing. Then something happened when you were a wee baby that made her as you see her now. I'll tell you about it some day."

And when the child grew older, she was told the story, which she in time wrote out for publication.

* * * * * * * * *

The old curtains were lying on the bed. We had been cutting them up that day because they were rather worn

and useless for their own former places at the long French windows. A bit of old lace lay, as if cast aside, at the foot of the bed apart from the rest.

As the afternoon was a trifle chilly, I was having a fire built in this room. Lydia was bending before the open fireplace, where the great brass andirons and fender seemed to tremble in the eternal flicker of the lately kindled flame. While the peaceful warmth began to fill the space about me and the perfumed March air crept in from the garden through the open windows, I thought in a lazy way of the pretty picture it all made,—the big fireplace with its polished fixtures, and that central figure bending there in her chocolate-colored beauty, her crisp, kinked hair tightly "shoestringed" down to her shapely head, and her wide dark eyes bent in absorbed fashion on the two-armed flame, which now twined itself about the big logs and now coquettishly withdrew only to twine itself about them more warmly yet. The eyes upon the flame suddenly fastened themselves upon the bed, then were raised shyly to mine.

"Miss Marie," said Lydia in a voice as soft and caressing as a thread of moonlight—she always did have the softest voice—"Miss Marie, is yo' gwine t'row 'way dat fine piece o' lace? Sholy, yo isn't." I could hear the unuttered request beneath the words.

"Why, you may have it if you care to, Lydia; though I don't see what you can possibly do with it."

"Oh, t'ank yo', Miss Marie; t'ank yo' kindly," she cried gratefully, as she went up to the stuff and took it between her hands, almost fondling it as she folded it. "An' I tell yo' wot I'se gwine do wid 'em: I'll mek some-

t'ing fo' de leel baby wid 'em bimeby, den I'll show dem bofe to you togedder."

Now Lydia was at the time the mother of what she considered a parental masterpiece not yet three months old. For Lydia was in her second year of matronhood, and Goodman, as she called her husband,—great, tall negro, beside whom she looked little more than a baby,—was more than twice her age. It would have been ludicrous to have seen the protecting care the girl exercised over the big man had it not struck me as a lovable and almost pathetic trait, —another evidence of the tender quality possessed by the mild-voiced, quiet-eyed creature—another sign of the indefinable sweetness that made one's heart go out to her.

I had never seen this baby of Lydia's, to her lasting disappointment, although the infant had been named for me. This is how he happened to be my namesake:

One day when we had run over the names of all the gods and godesses and prophets and apostles with which her numerous relatives were endowed, she finally decided that, "Ef you ain' 'solted, Miss Marie, I t'inks I'd like to gib de leel baby yo' name."

"But, Lydia," I protested; "the baby's a boy, and mine is a girl's name."

"Yes, Miss Marie; I know dat. But yo'se got so much gumption,—'scusin' de compliment, Miss Marie,—dat I t'ought yo' mought mek 'em eento a boy name; enty?"

So we arranged to call the child "Marion." Nothing else would have satisfied my gentle little maid, as nothing would have surprised her more than my having declined; because the fact was that Lydia felt that she had an heredi-

tary claim on me. Hadn't all her people been born in my family? Didn't the families belong to each other? as she had often asked me, forgetting, as is so customary with family servants, the relation of master and slave existing between my forbears and the generations of her race that had grown up on the old plantation and had been gathered in like the cotton on the same soil. When I transplanted the girl from the old place to this town, about a hundred miles from every person and thing she had known and loved, I became to her the incarnation of all old loves and old associations; and consequently she centered in me the devotion that had formerly been lavished on them. Even in the new family ties she had formed, she never seemed to sink her peculiar affection for me, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I finally persuaded her, after the birth of her child, to spend her nights at the home that Goodman had provided for her and to which she had made previous to that time only occasional pilgrimages.

The months went on and on after that March day when I had given that bit of old stuff to Lydia, and the summer must have been well on its way,—for I remember the opoponax trees in the garden were gleaming with tender yellow where the little pill-like blossoms burst through the feathery green leaves, scattering sweetness throughout the air,—when I chanced to notice the girl as she came up the long flight of steps to the piazza one morning. She didn't look well. She drew one foot after the other with a sagging effect. I called her to me in order to examine her more closely, and said, to hide my scrutiny:

"Well, Lydia; you haven't brought the little baby to

see me in all this time. When are you going to bring him?"

"T'ank yo', Miss Marie," she said with a tired breathlessness; "I'se gwine bring 'em soon. Yo' see, Miss Marie, I ain' done mek up de leel frock fo' 'em wot yo' done gimme. I ain' hab no time yet to wuk on 'em; an', please, Miss Marie, I want yo' fo' to see de two togeder de fust time wot yo' see de leel baby. 'Sides, ee don' look so smaart now; ee ain' so well."

"Why, what's the matter with the poor little man, Lydia?"

"Nuttin' 'tall but a leel fresh cold. Den ee's cuttin' ee teet', too, now; an' I'se lookin' out fo' de spassums."

"So you sit up all night looking out for convulsions, Lydia? Now I can account for your looking so tired and thin."

"Well, yo' see, Miss Marie, de baby de cry all night, —ee de cry, an' nuttin' seem to sood 'em 'ceptin' I walks 'em up an' down—up an' down de flo' all night."

"Why doesn't Goodman walk the baby and let you rest, poor girl?"

"Goodman!" she cried in amazement. "*Me* let Goodman lose ee night's res' an' me sleep? Not me, Miss Marie! I'se got to take good care ob Goodman, 'cause ee's faderless an' mudderless,—po' Goodman!—faderless an' mudderless! No, Miss Marie. I'se got ma pa an' ma, an' Cupid an' Prosper an' Cæsar, an' all ma udder kin. But Goodman ee ain' got but jes' only me to be good to 'em—jes' only me. An' tain' right, Miss Marie, not to take good

care ob Goodman, 'cause ee's faderless an' mudderless, an' ee ain' got but jes' only me to be good to 'em."

I knew that I could say nothing to convince her of Goodman's capability to take care of both himself and her as well as of their child, so I held my peace; and with a charge to her to bring the baby to see me as soon as the great lace dress should be made, I sent her about her daily tasks.

The next day Lydia failed to put in an appearance, and when two more days passed and there remained no sign of her, I determined to go and see if anything were the matter. So I got together a few medicines that I knew to be good for babies,—chancing to remember that the baby, too, had not been well, and set out for her home. The place was some distance from here, away down by the water, where the sea splashing madly against the shore that day seemed like the jaws of some huge monster covered with foam.

I stopped at the number Lydia had given me. A gate within a gate was before me: a great double board driveway spiked at the top, into one side of which was cut a door large enough to admit one person at a time. To the right and left of this opening stretched a high brick wall, the top covered with shattered bottles imbedded in cement, the ragged edges, pointing upward, dazzling as bayonet points in the faltering sunlight, while here and there between the bottles a tall weed reared itself rooted in the rot of ages. I raised the latch and stepped into the large paved yard. Between the flagstones, as on the wall, the weeds, too, were growing. The yard was surrounded by houses that had

once been the servants' quarters of some broken-down aristocrat of antebellum days. Poor aristocrat! He was now trying to eke out a narrow existence by renting rooms to respectable colored families.

The whole yard seemed to sleep. I walked aimlessly up to one of the doors and rapped. Lydia herself opened it instantly, and as she caught sight of me, a smile broke over her watch-weary face,—a smile that had all the effect of the first glimpse of dawn in a starless night sky.

"Well, Lydia," I cried cheerily, "is the baby any better? If he's not, we'll soon make him well; for I've brought lots of things to dose him up with."

"T'ank yo', Miss Marie. Please, won't yo' come eenside de do'—an' 'scuse 'pearances?" she returned in her soft way. The voice sounded even more velvety than usual, and a trifle quieter, too, I thought.

I followed her into a room, which opened directly on the yard, entering an atmosphere where a slight odor of fried fish mingled with that of kerosene oil. Everything, however, was immaculate in its neatness; from the tall bed,—whose middle, bursting with fullness under the log-cabin quilt, was fenced in by the great ornamental posts and tiny railing at head and foot,—to the bare board floor concealed in small patches by faded bits of Brussels carpet, gleaned from many sources, as the variety of patterns testified. I remember looking at the wall, with its old-time colored fashion-plates collected by Lydia,—each figure carefully scissored out and pasted in grotesque way here and there about the rough-coated room, producing the effect of a wall-paper of some bizarre pattern,—and then I

became conscious of what was just before me in the midst of all this.

There on a table lay the little baby—dead. So tiny and brown and pretty and still, with its slender dark

The little hand rested upon a bit of old lace curtain

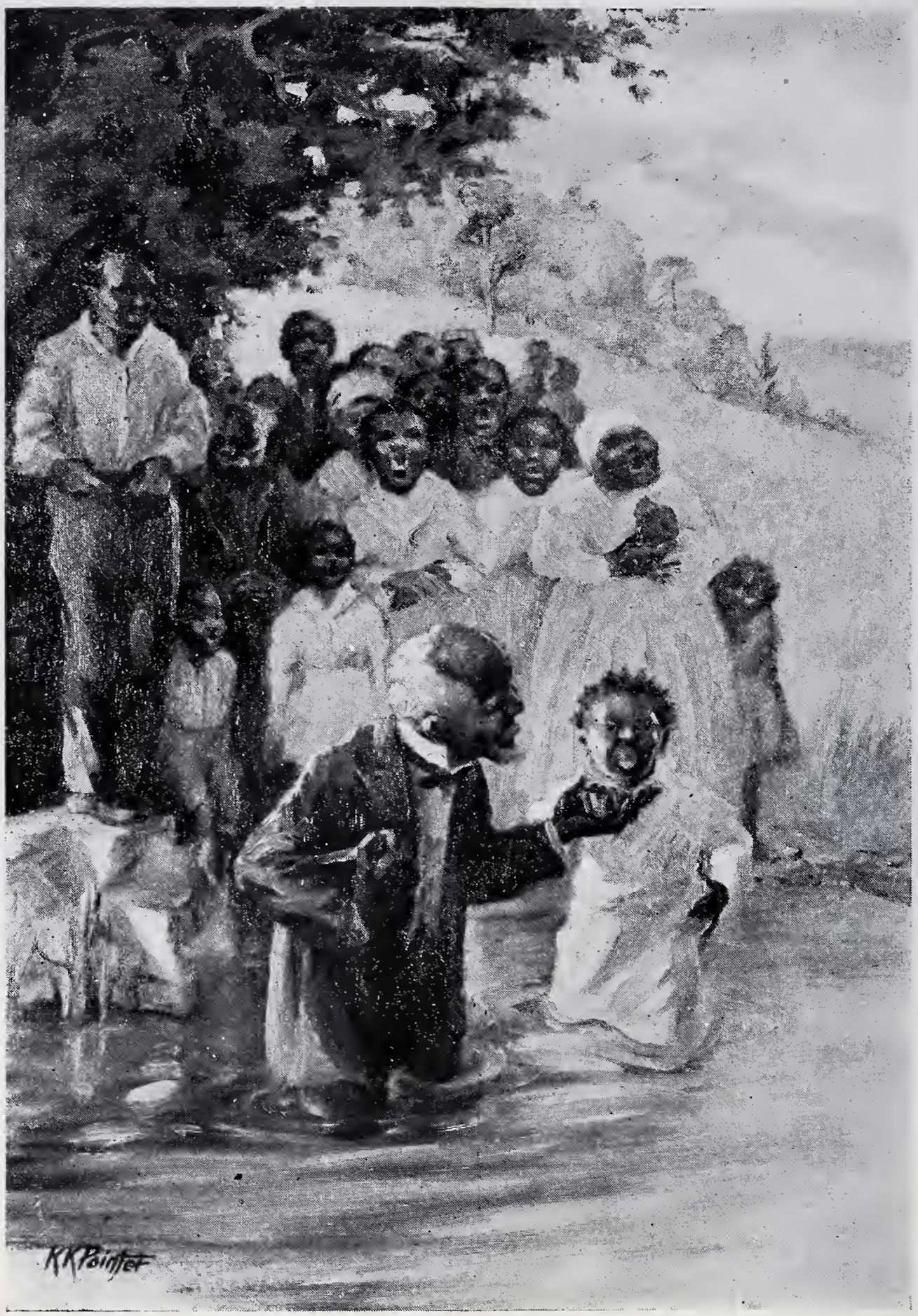
fingers half open as the hands rested on the quiet form. It didn't look dead. I leaned down to see if the breath did not still come. And there, drawn up over the little white-clad body, the tiny hands resting lightly upon it, was the bit of old lace curtain.

"Nuttin' ain' too good fo' de leel fellow now, Miss Marie," said the mother, her eye intelligently following mine.

I wanted to say something, and could not; but Lydia smiled understandingly at me—I would rather have heard her wail. Then she looked, still smiling, down at the little

figure lying between us, and said just above her breath, as if fearful of breaking her baby's rest:

"Eet ain' so bad now, Miss Marie; 'deed tain't, 'cause I'se got 'em wid me yet. But I dunno wot I'se gwine do tomorrer w'en ee's done took away, Miss Marie,—I dunno wot I'se gwine do tomorrer."



The ghostly man stepped into the water, leading by the hand the white-clad, brown-faced candidate

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V

DOWN BY THE RIVER

"I SE gwine to be baptise' nex' Sunday, leel missy."

Clarinda made the declaration with the same gleaming smile and secular air as would have accompanied the announcement of her intention of going to a picnic.

The child had been preoccupied at the moment, absorbed in some childish occupation, so she asked of the smiling black maid:

"What's that, Clarinda?" meaning that she had not heard the colored girl's remark; but Clarinda misunderstood, and proceeded to go into her usual verbose explanations, as she put the nursery to rights. Clarinda would really have been helpless with her hands had she had no tongue, for the soothing accompaniment of her own voice seemed necessary to the accomplishment of her daily labors.

"W'y, leel missy; don' yo' know wot dat ees?" Her big eyes looked her amazement at the child's spiritual

ignorance. "Yo'se had eet done to yose'f. I 'member eet puffickly, but I reckon yo' clean done forgit 'bout eet, bein' as you was only two mont's ole. I 'member yo' leel gown was all lace and w'ite ribbons, an' eet was so long dat eet fair hide de whole ob yo' mauma from sight. I ain' gone to see yo' at de chu'ch, but I knows all 'bout how yo' done ack. Yo' done cry, dey say, an' I t'ink eet was 'cause yo' was too young to be baptise. But den, yo' all's 'Sicopelians an' we all's Baptis'. We all follows de way ob John de Baptis', yo' know, an' we do jes' like he done do w'en ee baptise de blessed Maaster een de Riber Jordan. We all's gwine down to de riber Sunday afternoon, an' dere de Rebrun Smalley gwine mek us chillun ob God w'en ee tek us by de han' an' soak de sin out ob us, jes' like de water done wash de dirt out ob clo'es, yo' know, missy."

The child's face was alight with interest as she asked eagerly:

"Oh, Clarinda, how nice! And can anybody go to see you baptised? Why, maybe mauma'll take me!"

"No, *ma'am*, leel missy; yo' mauma ain' gwine tek yo' to no sicher t'ing, 'cause she ain' neber done 'scuse me fo' being a Baptis'. Dem Methodies, like yo' mauma, be so swanger dat dey t'inks dat dey's no chu'ch 'pon de eart' 'scusin' de Methody. But I'se done got my own kin' ob 'ligion bad now, an' I'se wantin' to be obershadow by de flood ob righteousness."

After giving voice to which tremendous phrase, the reproduction probably of her ghostly councilor's own expression, Clarinda paused in her work for some moments. Her rolling black eyes were uplifted, her breath bated.

The trance-like look on her face impressed the child with its unusualness, for she knew the coffee-colored maid to be worldly in the extreme, and the little girl felt growing within her an awed curiosity to witness the phenomenal ceremony, the very mention of which could work such a transformation in the giddy Clarinda's countenance.

Beside the frisking stream sang the solemn sons and daughters of Africa

Mauma, despite Clarinda's prediction, was too catholic in her views and too fond of her "daater" to keep away from a ceremonial in which the small girl had expressed such an interest as in this baptism. Besides, with the old nurse, as with most of her race, religion was a dominant instinct, more compelling evidently than the need of bodily sustenance or even of sleep, and its manifestation always attracted her. So the next Sunday afternoon found the golden-haired child, holding fast the old black woman's

hand, moving down to the place appointed for Clarinda's becoming a Christian soldier along with her coreligionists.

Down by the river the sun shone gladly through the gathered groups of dusky candidates and their witnesses, —this last collection piled together in an almost barbaric display of color, in glaring contrast to the snowy gowns of those about to join the church militant. As these sons and daughters of Africa stood thus beside the frisking, sun-kissed water, the child, still clasping tightly her mauma's hand in inexplicable excitement, wondered at the feverish light of religious ecstacy that shone from the big black eyes set in each Negro face, alert with expectation of the summons of the old black preacher who was to administer the rite. And all the while the little girl's heart went out in sympathy and tenderness and understanding to those people who, in their dependence and symplicity, seemed but children themselves.

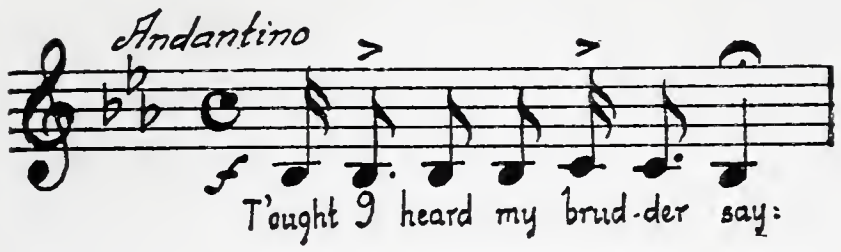
Suddenly, above the softly buzzing crowd, there arose a man's voice; and at once a reverent silence fell.

"Breden an' sisters, let's now sing *Lub-Feas' een Heaben.*"

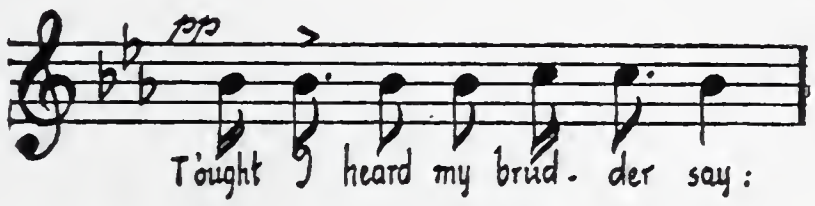
At the announcement of the hymn, mauma, with an air of intense satisfaction, bent low to the attentive child and whispered:

"Yo' hear dat, daater? Dat's one ob we-all's heems,—Methody, yo' know."

And, through the luke-warm atmosphere, began the droning melody, with its quaint lilt and plenitude of expression. First rang softly a single deep voice:



And while the deep tones still lingered on the final note of the passage, the higher voices echoed:



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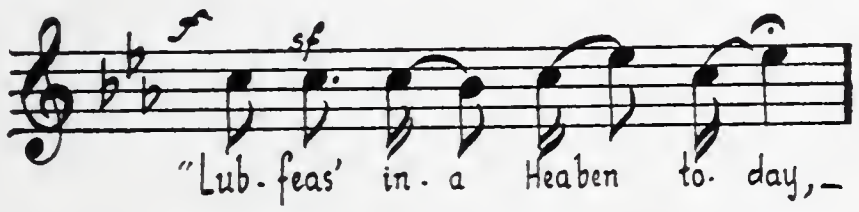
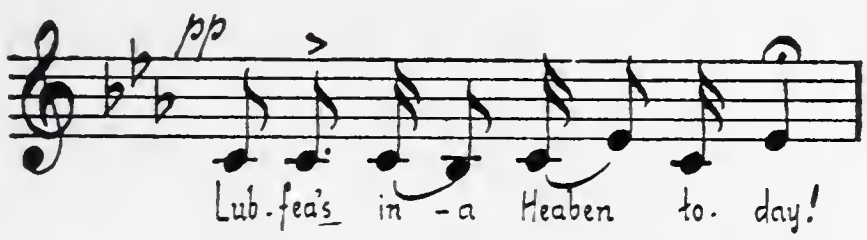
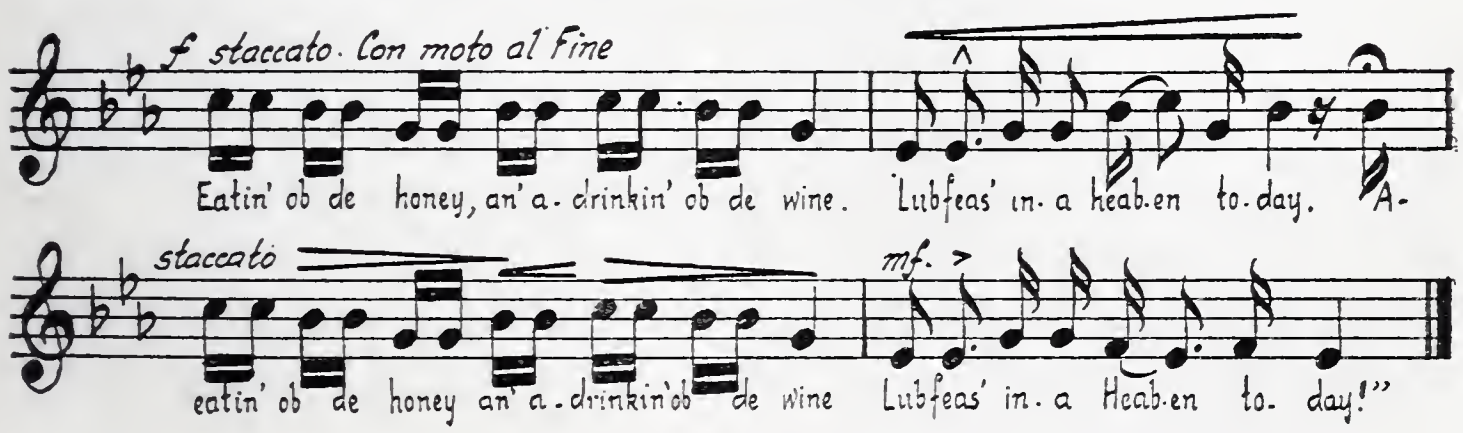


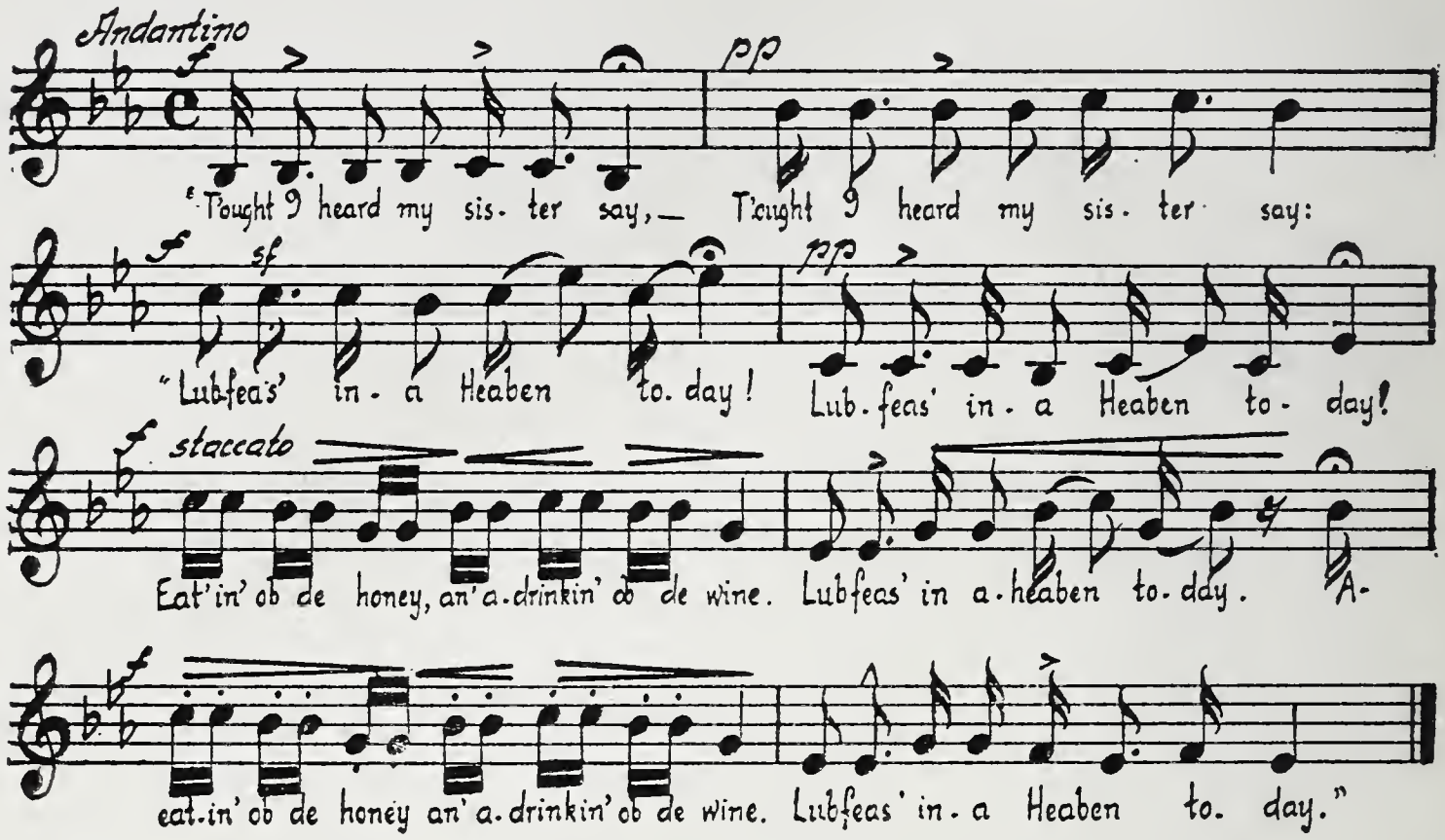
Again the deep voices answered very low:



And then loud and free rang jubilantly the rest of the hymn, with all the abandon of exceeding joy:



In the same manner was sung the second stanza, though it could hardly be called another stanza, for there was the alteration of but a single word, "sister" being substituted for "brudder."

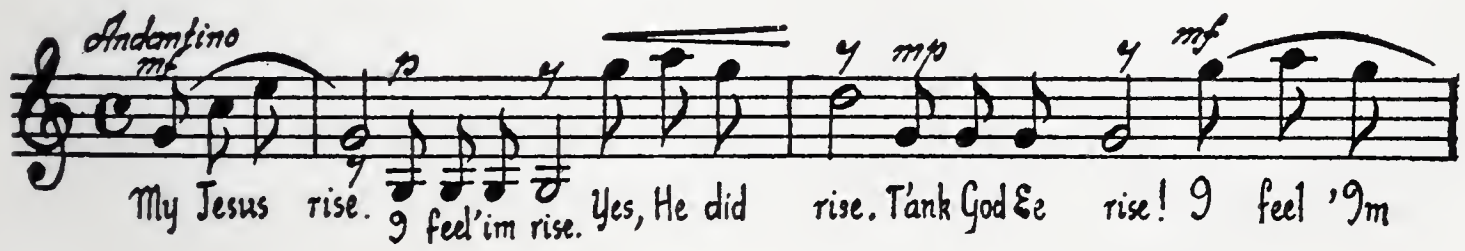


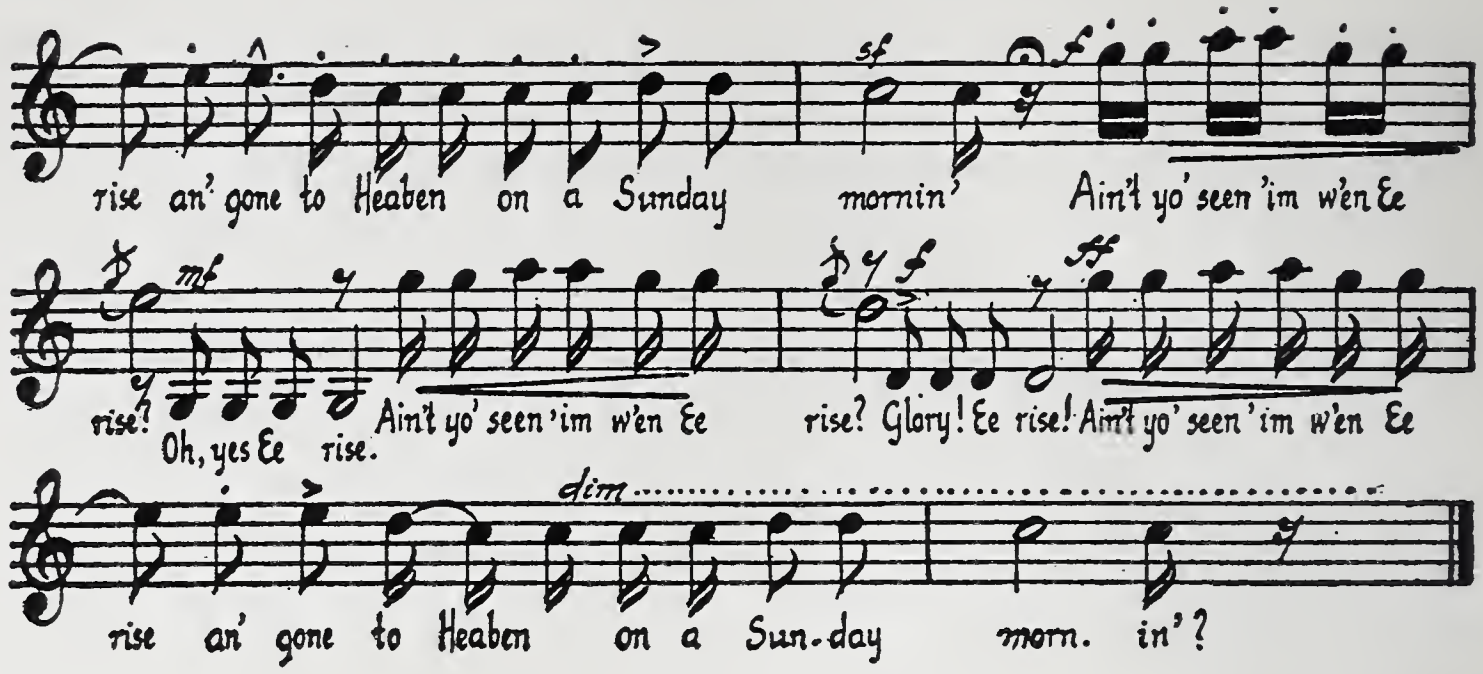
Deep was the silence that fell upon the reverent spectators,—a silence that was broken almost at once by the old darky preacher. Gazing with age-dimmed, spectacled eyes over his attentive host, he murmured long in earnest prayer, too low perhaps to reach the edges of the crowd, but in a tone that the devout old man had never a doubt would reach the Throne of Grace. After the final "Amen," the voice went on in fuller accents:

"Bredren an' sisters, I ain' gwine talk to yo' long dis blessed Sabba' day, 'cause yo' all's come yere to hab me do de t'ing to some ob yo' wot John de Baptis' done do een

de olden time fo' our Lord an' Maaster. John, ee say ee hab only de power, like me, to baptise wid de water; but de Maaster alone kin put eento yo' haarts de Holy Sperrit, an' fill yo' wid de Holy Ghos'. All dat ain' gwine come t'rough me, my bredren, but t'rough yo' own trus' een yo' Sabior. De Holy Ghos' am de soodin' comforter, my chillun, wot comes eento yo' haarts an' meks dem clean widin yo' breas'. Today some ob my belobed am gwine to be wash' ob deir sins an' receibe de blessed Holy Ghos', an' to dose I say: Do like yo' Maaster done w'en John de Baptis' done 'merse 'Im een de Riber Jordan, an' w'en yo' comes out ob dat riber dere, lif' yo' eyes, my chillun, to de Heaben above, an' eben ef yo' t'ink yo' don' see 'em wid yo' eye ob de flesh, de sperrit ob de Lord am comin' down from de t'rone,—comin' down on yo' like a dobe,—an' a voice will be soundin' t'rough all de firmament to you, sayin': 'Dou art my well-lobed chile, in whom I am well please.' Hark to dat voice, open wide de ears ob yo' haarts, an' hear dem blessed words dat tells yo' dat yo' hab come to be de chillun ob God indeed. An' now, my bredren, w'ile de candidates wot repent an' would be wash' ob sin come to receibe de Holy Sperrit een dis water, will yo' all please jine een an' sing *My Jesus Rise?*"

Obedient at the word, arose the ever-ready voices:



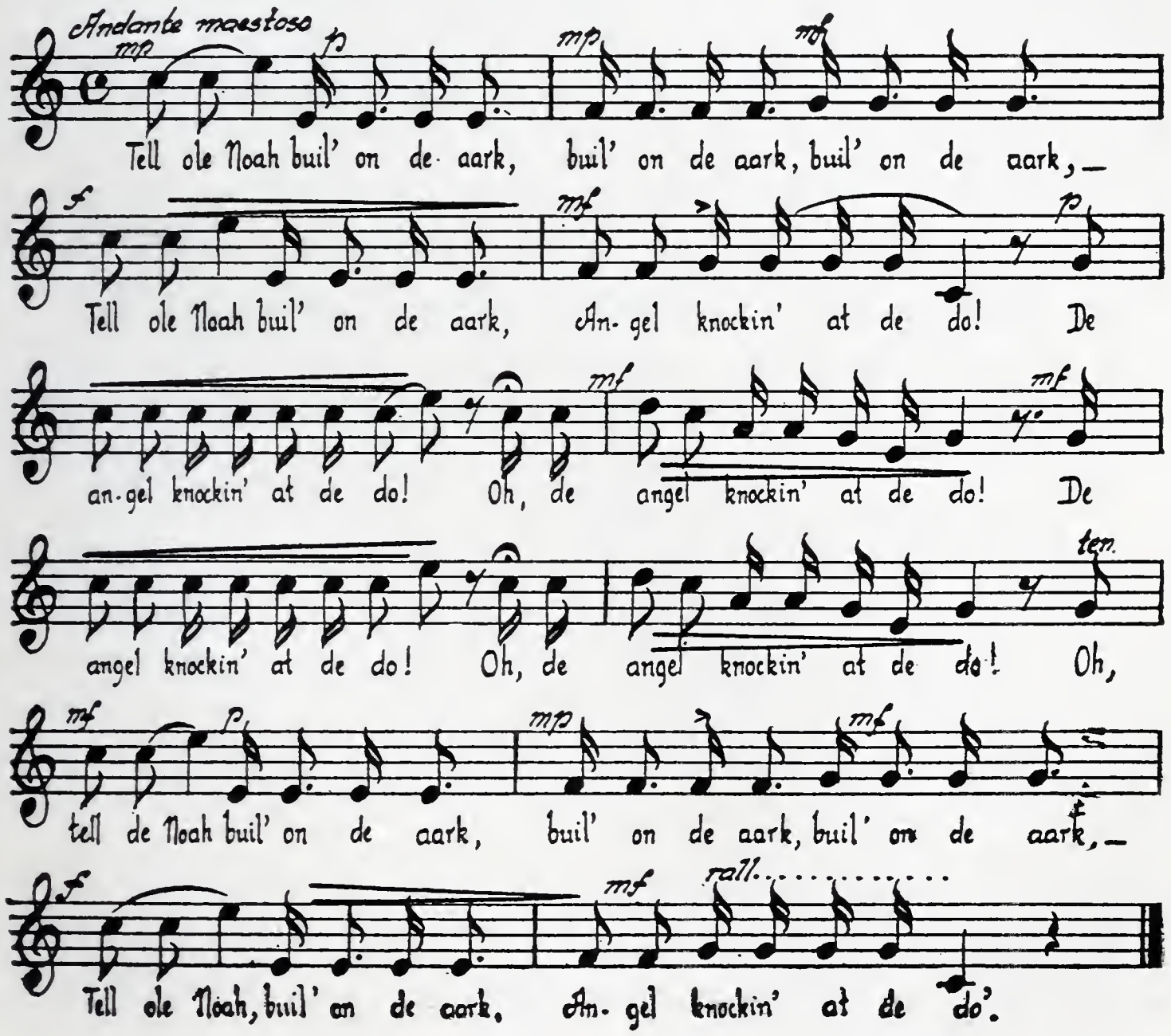


It seemed an interminable hymn to the child who stood first on one tired little foot then on the other, waiting wearily as stanza after stanza rang out on the Sabbath silence,—stanzas unvarying in words except for the introduction of various names of Biblical characters who witnessed the Resurrection; for example, "Mary seen 'im w'en Ee rise," or "Jacob seen 'im w'en Ee rise," and so on indefinitely, until, from sheer lack of endurance, the congregation fell out of the singing one by one and stillness reigned again but for the shouts and sobs of those undergoing immersion.

For, during the progress of the singing, the ghostly man had stepped into the river and, walking far out, leading by the hand each white-clad, brown-faced candidate in turn, with low-spoken words would duck her beneath the surface of the river, from which she would arise dripping, gasping, her limp robes clinging closely to her slightly shivering form, but in her eyes, uplifted to the limpid heavens, a look of spiritual gladness. As each one,—some-

times a man, sometimes a woman,—was immersed, there would arise from different throats in that emotional gathering cries of religious fervor: "T'ank de Lord!" "Glory! glory!" "De Lord be praise'!" "Answer prayer!" came in devout gasps from the baptised, echoed by those on the shore.

At length, the assembled crowd, the limit of their tolerance of a musical hiatus having been reached, burst into a weird, majestic melody that ran after this fashion:



"Come, daater," whispered mauma at about the fifth repetition of the tune, "I reckon we bes' go home. Yo'se done stan' long enough."

"No, no, mauma,—not yet. Clarinda hasn't been in the water yet, and I promised her I would see her go in. There! there! he's taking her in now!"

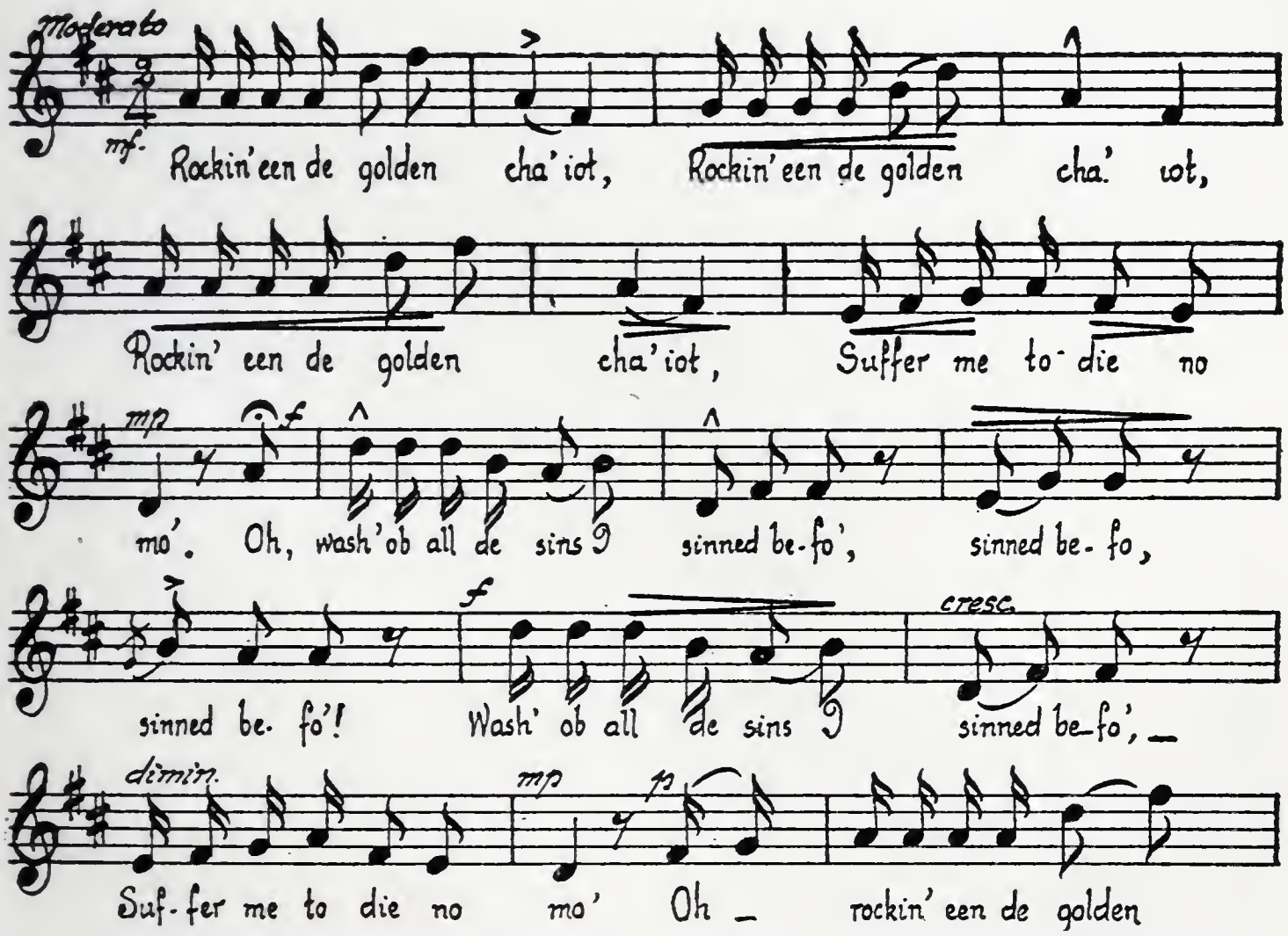
It was as the child said. The secular Clarinda, duskily fair in her baptismal robes, holding the "Rebrum" Smalley tightly by the hand, stepped with an awed, nervous look into the dancing river. With words meant only for her repentent ear, the old white-haired preacher gave her a little persuasive push to urge her head beneath the surface of the wavering water. But Clarinda, aroused to a dramatic pitch by her religious enthusiasm, resisted womanfully for a few moments, looked with transfigured countenance and with eyes aglow into the sunny sky, as if she were seeing a vision of unearthly beauty, and loudly shouted in a voice that soared above the music on the shore:

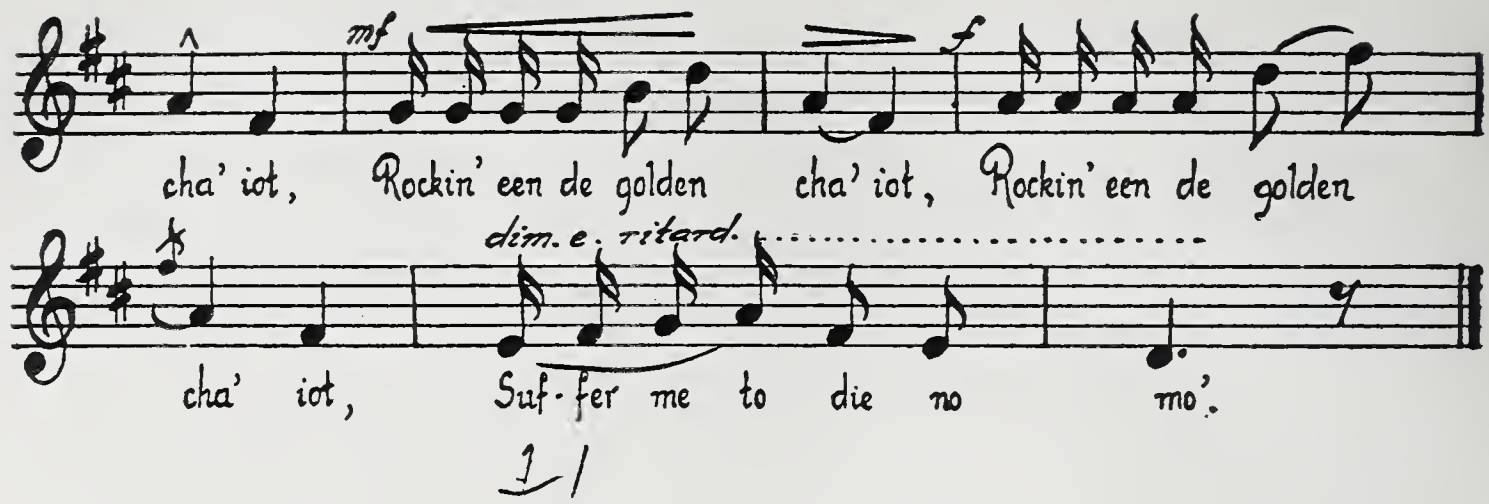
"Praise de Lord!—praise be to His name! I'se got de power! Good-bye, sin; good-bye!"

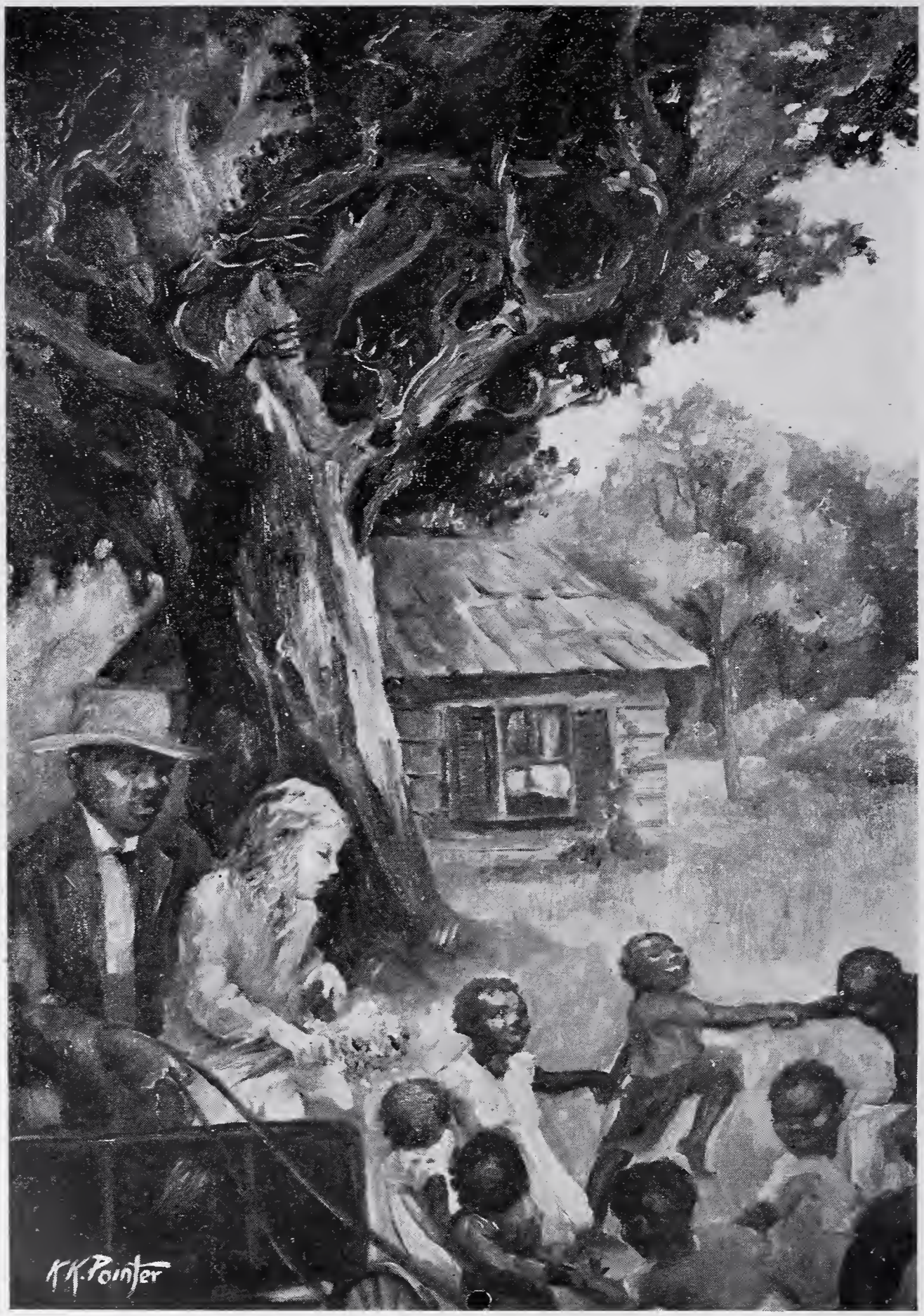
With these words, she yielded to the insistent touch of her gentle old pastor and sank under the water, out of which she straightway emerged, cold and choking, but with that beatific light still beaming from her unnaturally brilliant eyes.

"Now dat's ober, ain' yo' ready to go home, daater?" asked the old nurse in hushed tones. And the child, feeling that she had lent the moral support of her innocent

white countenance to Clarinda on this eventful Sunday in the black girl's spiritual career, allowed herself to be led in the direction of home. But through all the years-to-be she never forgot that last glimpse of the group of colored faces beaming with ecstacy,—almost exaltation,—that shone in the glad sunshine as she turned away from the shore, and she was haunted long by the swing and sway of the voices that, until she was far on her way home, sounded through the solemn stillness of that Sunday afternoon, filling the ear with their soulful earnestness as they poured forth the simple old Negro strains:




mf
f
cha' iot, Rockin' een de golden cha' iot, Rockin' een de golden
dim. e. ritard.
cha' iot, Suf-fer me to die no mo'.



"Dance around, my sugar-lumpsy, my molasses candy!"

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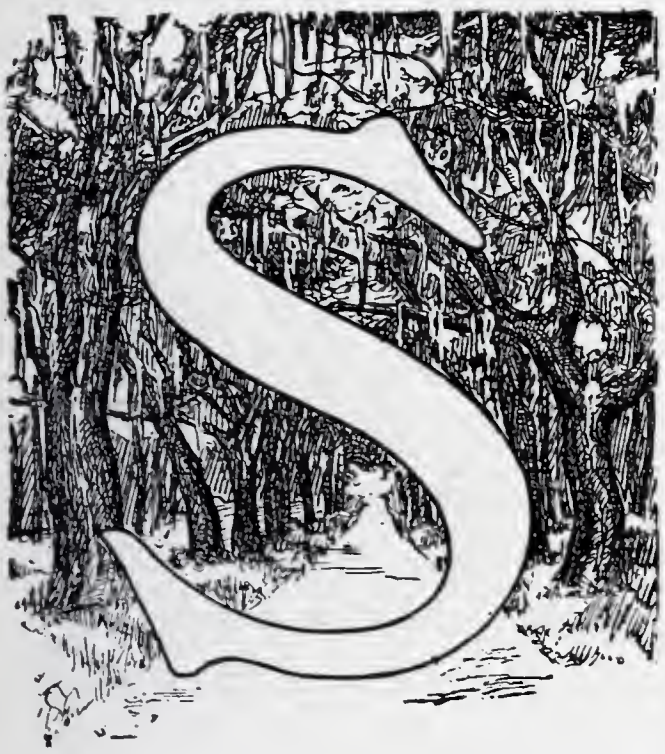
VI

LITTLE BLACK ROSE



PRING had come. The jessamine clung in graceful yellow sweetness intoxicatingly about the trunks of the great oaks that stretched out their ancient knotted arms, heavy with their burdens of melancholy moss.

But what did the child know of melancholy when it was glad, perfumed springtime, and she was allowed to run wild for a few happy weeks at the old plantation home of her mother? Were not the great oak avenues there,—those old, old oaks that led in stately fashion up to the big plantation house? How she loved them, with their austere shadows, which even the frolicsome sun could never lighten! And how she loved the simple flowers,—wild flowers that threw out their deep unstudied fragrance, and seemed to grow there so spontaneously, without care, without guidance, without gardener other than Nature. Indeed, the child loved everything about the great old country

place,—whose thousands of acres stretched everywhere till sight lost itself,—loved even the venomous little living things that slid and crawled in slinking shyness through the rank greenery about,—loved even the green lizards that blinked the interrupted sleep out of their eyes and slipped noiselessly away to where the silence dwells at the approach of the child's flying feet.

The child's feet were always flying during those glad days in that fair country. Like some spirit of the air or of the woods she sped about,—golden hair lashed by the brisk breeze, eyes aglow with the mere joy of healthy young life, toes hardly touching the velvety ground, and her light-hearted voice rising,—rising to mingle its human tones with the mocking bird's melting music 'way up on the towering branches.

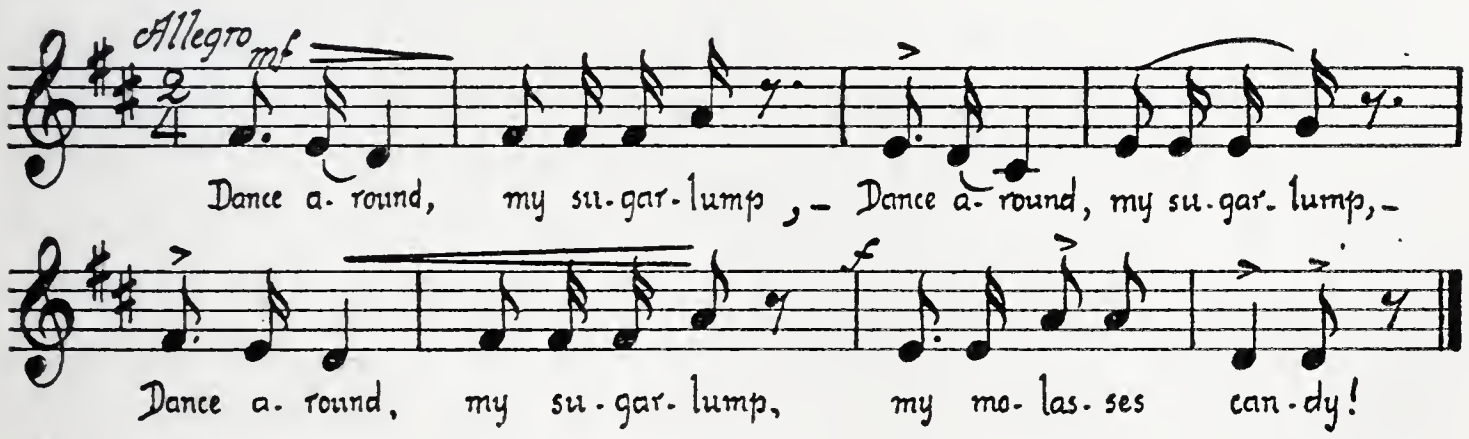
Old mauma found it hard work to keep pace with that bounding little figure that was ever busy to be out in the midst of the perfume and the flowers and the birds. For the horses and the dogs about the place, the child seemed not to have the same love. They were part of her home life, and for them she had a feeling apart,—the feeling of certainty that is always associated with every-day things. It was the sweet, unfamiliar charm of the country that enveloped her here, which filled her head with curiosity and her heart with delight, which made everything about her seem unreal, radiant, fairylike.

But though mauma's old feet seldom followed the child far abroad in what seemed to the little girl an enchanted land, yet there was another (as black as the old nurse, as devoted, as protecting in her young, helpless way)

who flitted after her mistress, close as the child's own shadow,—a little Negro girl known as Little Black Rose.

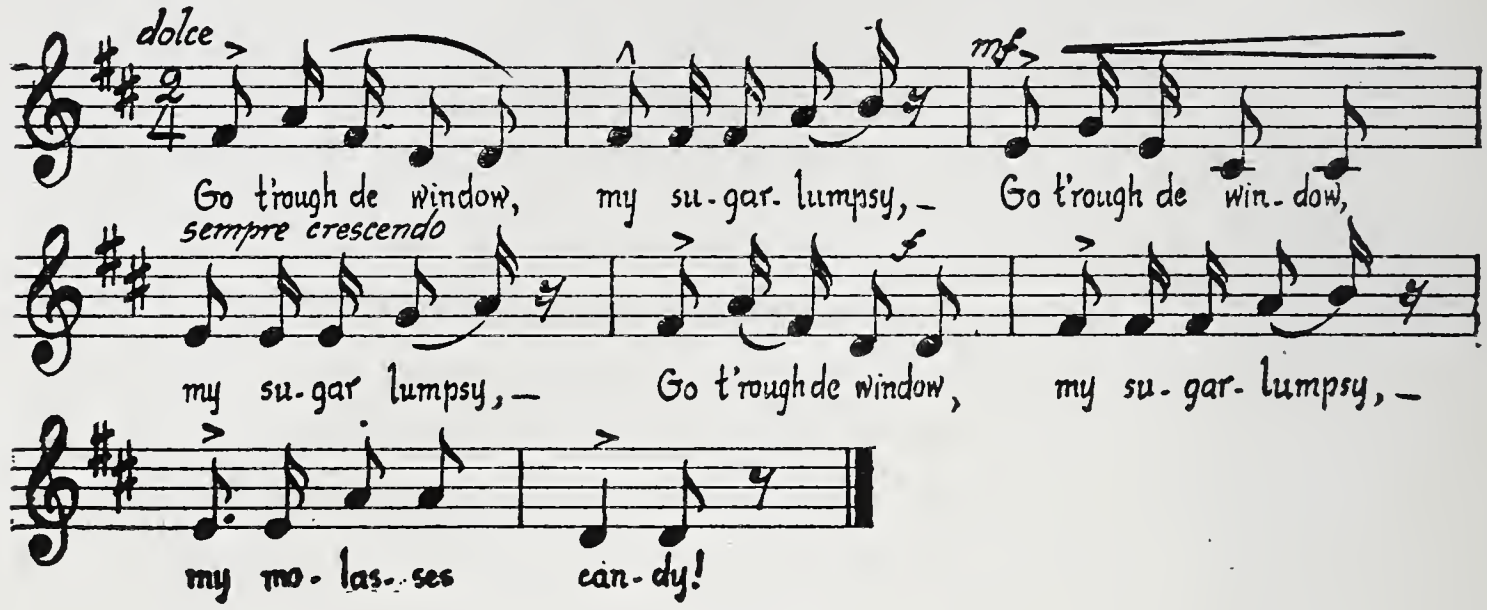
The child had come across this small colored girl after this fashion:

One autumn she and mauma were being driven over the old family plantation, where the cotton, peeping so plenteously from the wide bolls, giving the broad acres the appearance of snow-covered meadows, filled her little head with all kinds of pretty fancies. Suddenly she caught the sound of childish voices singing in falsetto tones a merry little ditty. The carriage she was in drew nearer to the sounds, which came from the clusters of humble houses where the field hands made their homes. All at once there burst upon the child's view a large group of bare-footed, kinky-headed, half-clad colored children under the open sky, engaged in a riotous round-dance, which they were treading, with all hands joined, to the music of their own shrill young throats:



The horses were checked into a halt, for the child wished to watch this game, or dance, whichever it might be. She noticed when one verse had been sung to the ac-

companiment of the tripping feet, that one of the dusky dancers separated herself from the rest, and, while the others stood with joined, uplifted hands, would thread her rhythmic way with untutored grace in and out among the singers, who kept on with their ditty.



The child looked on with the interest that children always take in one another. But alone of all those careless creatures, one face drew her irresistibly,—a little, oval, black countenance, with solemn, unsmiling mouth and round, tranquil eyes, the owner of which moved harmoniously to the measured strains as her bare black legs, beneath the scant calico frock, swung seriously here and there in the dance. She was a little Negro girl only a year or two older than the child herself. With almost hypnotic power, the young mistress of the place drew that one small dancer's eye to hers, and, comprehendingly, the little darky deserted the merry dancers and came, as if obedient to a call, sedately toward the waiting carriage, her eyes ever solemn, her lips unsmiling.

Naturally enough, the child's first words, as she gazed into that unemotional, unquestioning face looking so steadily into her own, were:

"What's your name?"

"Leel Black Rose," came the answer in the softest of Negro accents.

"Whose little black Rose?"

"Ain' nobody's. Jes' Leel Black Rose."

"But your mother,—who is she?"

"Ain' neber seen 'em. Ee's gone to de 'silunce."

The last incomprehensible word puzzled the child. Her instinctive gentleness told her that, though the word suggested only something unfamiliar to her, it meant somethingthing awful to the little unshod creature, with those big black eyes uplifted so tranquilly to her own blue ones. She paused in uncertainty before she put the next curious question:

"Please tell me about that. What is the 'silunce,' Rose?"

"Don't yo' know, missy? W'y eet's de luniticky's silunce,—de place whey de cracked pussons ees took to. Ma mudder been dat'er way eber sence I'se been bawn." The simplicity of the statement took away none of its sadness.

There was a long silence, while the patient old nurse kept wondering what her "daater" could be meditating on. Then a sudden prompting, angelic in its tenderness, stirred the child to say:

"Little Black Rose, I want you to come up to the big house every day and help mauma take care of me, because

she gets so tired sometimes,—and play with me all over the big place, and help me to pick flowers and—and—oh, do lots of things!"

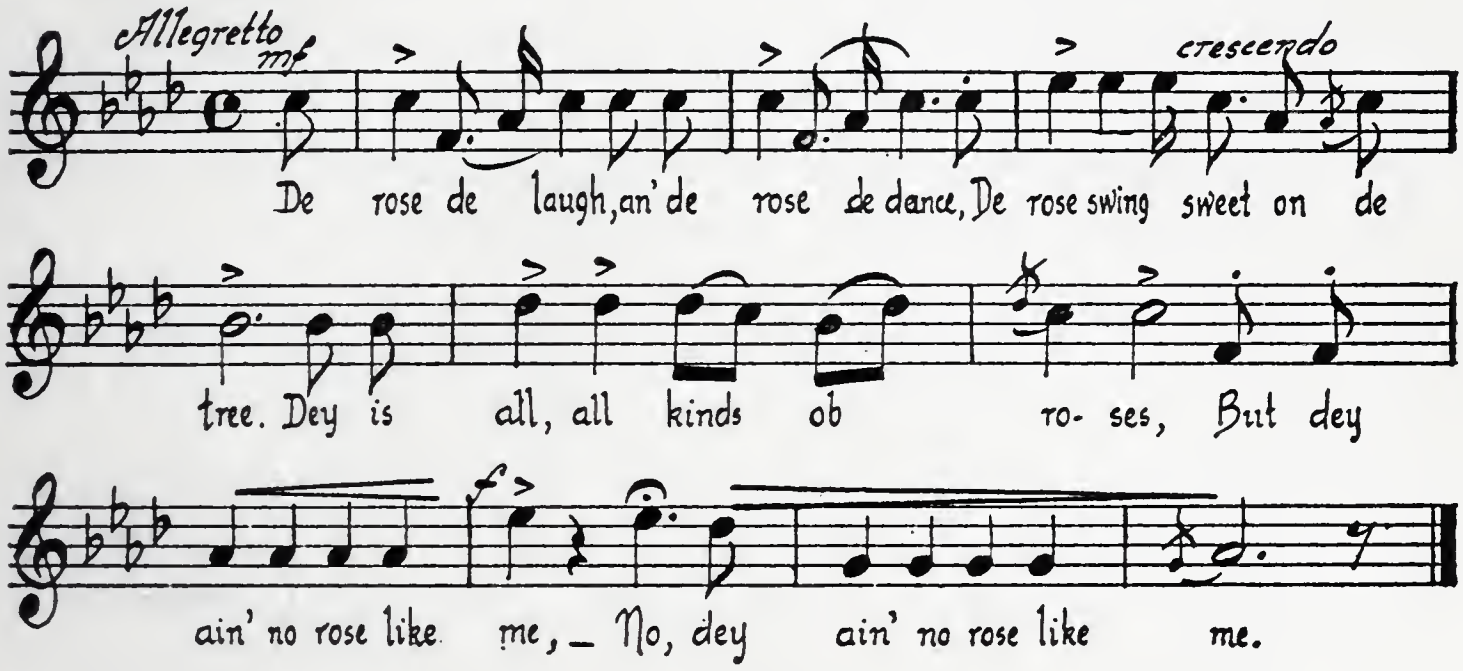
The round black eyes grew rounder in their solemnity; but there was a ring of joy in the velvety voice of the small darky as she returned:

"Sho', missy; oh, sho' I'll come!"

And from that day on Rose became as her "missy's" very shadow.

The child never ceased congratulating herself on the acquisition of this little servant, little guide, little playmate, and little friend, all put up in one small black bundle. Little Black Rose was a perfect treasury of weird information. She knew the most extraordinary and delicious tales, the recital of which could be continued from day to day like a Chinese tragedy, or the *Arabian Nights*. She knew the very hour after the day was done at which the terrible hags were wont to enter the windows of bad children and ride them all night long. She taught the child how to distinguish between the hag-ridden colored children and the more worthy unridden ones,—by the look of the skins. She knew precisely what length and quality of prayer to use in order to bring just the right quantity of rain for a perfect cotton crop,—not too much rain, which was sure to make the morning-glories to grow among the precious plants and so spoil their growth, but just exactly enough. She knew the queerest and densest and greenest hiding-places, yet those where the dreaded rattlesnake dared not enter because of certain incantations she would pronounce. And she knew her own fascinating little song about roses

which came from nowhere, probably, except out of her uncanny little noddle, but which seemed to be familiar to everyone in the land,—a song that she always would sing to warn her little mistress that she was near:



But those were only the small black girl's accomplishments. She had other qualities,—useful ones. Neat and trim, her once little bare black feet now softly shod; and, her clean calico-covered form held proudly erect, she would stand at meal-time behind her little mistress's chair, waving the fly-brush to and fro, deep gratification for her office shining in her great solemn round eyes. It was always the child's place at table that had the most gorgeous gift of flowers, grouped in oriental splendor of color,—the work of Little Black Rose. The colored girl seemed to have but one desire in life: to serve and love the little white girl, to be near her. Wherever the child was on the plantation, little Rose was her constant attendant and outdoor comrade,—as close as a shadow, as faithful as a dog.

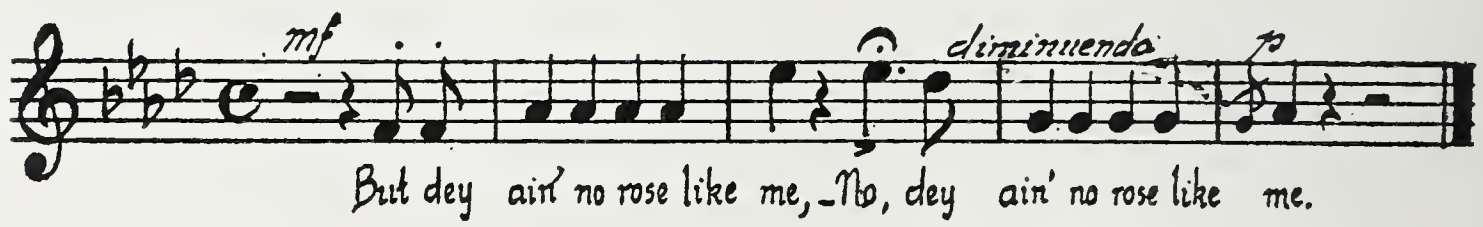
It was at their first parting that the child, seeing the speaking look of pleading on the little black face, said:

"I'm not going so very far away, Rose; and anyhow, I'm coming back soon,—in a little while. Don't feel bad. If you want something, tell me what it is. Can't I do something for you?" She had never seen her playmate look so yearning before, and it troubled her.

"Do, missy?—do?" echoed the solemn-faced black girl, and her round eyes spread themselves pathetically and long over the fair, eager face looking half-comprehendingly into hers, before she went on: "Yessum, missy; ef yo' don' mind, sometime w'en yo'se fur away, an' yo' kneels down to say dem leel pray's ob yo's, won' yo' please put een: 'God bless po' Leel Black Rose, an' keep 'er out ob de 'silunce.' "

And from that time the child understood that a haunting dread of that vague thing known to her as "the asylum" was ever with her little Negro comrade,—a dread that kept the smile from her immature lips and rounded her eyes so solemnly.

Now spring was come again and the child was joyful as she roamed the flowered country in the companionship of all things natural and beautiful, under the faithful eyes of Little Black Rose, from whose black lips were always springing snatches of her favorite:



And both the children were happy, each after her own heart.

One April morning the little white child was gambolling with her solemn-eyed colored comrade under the immense old oaks on which the webby Spanish moss waved mournfully in the lightly stirring air, as it had waved for centuries over just such light-hearted spirits as these two, when the child, suddenly seized with a sort of infantile *wanderlust,* called out to her playmate:

"Rose,—oh, let's run away!"

At this unheard-of suggestion from the lips of her beloved, infallible "missy," the small black girl's sombre eyes were startled out of their usual sad roundness.

"No, missy; oh, no, *please!*" It cost her a mighty effort to voice that refusal, not only because the child's words had almost taken her breath away, but because it was the first time during all their association that there had ever been any occasion for the word "no" to come to the little maid's lips in answer to her mistress.

The child tossed her golden, wind-blown curls in the *abandon* of mirth as she looked into that shocked dark countenance.

"Oh, I don't mean run *far* away, Rose; just to some new place you've never shown me before,—anywhere in the dark woods. Won't you?"

"Oh, ees dat all, missy? Den I'll go, an' show yo' to a place whey de Cherokee roses am so t'ick dat yo' kin haardly brek t'rough. Come, missy."

The springlike odors of the country, mingled with the bright yet veiled light from the sky, seemed to render the

child more and more impatient to get far away from where humanity dwelt, and she sped like a spectre a little in advance of her eager, fleet-footed guide. The woods and their mystery delighted her, invited her on; and, all unaware, she broke suddenly through the jealously drawn shrubbery and found herself in an unfamiliar open track. One moment she paused, uncertain which way to turn, then a tremendous noise, rattling, pounding, tumultuous, struck her ears, as a frightened voice behind her shrieked:

"Fo' de Lord's sake, missy,—run,—run fo' yo' life!"

But the noise drew nearer,—thundering, driving,—and something huge seemed to be rushing on the child madly, with giant bounds. Then, in a flash, she realized that she was on the railroad track against which she had so often been warned. Before the silent terror of such a position had time to come upon her, or her feet had time to obey any prompting of her brain, the child felt two strong little hands strike her roughly and squarely in the back and hurl her downward to the hard ground, while at the same instant a noise so terrific and deafening that it seemed as if it would be such a nice thing to be able to go to sleep forever so as to get rid of it all, beat, beat into her head. And with the noise came a burst of air so strong, so sweeping, that the child longed for something secure to catch hold of so that her body might not be lifted up and carried far away by the terrible current.

Swiftly as it had come, the noise, the wind, passed away. The train had gone. The child knew that. She was safe. Yet she lay there on the road-bed just where little Rose had thrown her so forcibly, with her eyes shut, trying

to court a moment of darkness, of oblivion, trying to rest and forget. And still there was a feeling in her that she must find out where little Rose was.

"Missy, missy," came a tremulous voice, "is yo' hu't much? Oh, ma missy, I ain't mean' to hit yo' so haard, but dey wan't no udder way, missy, but jes' to hit yo' down an' den to jump a'ter yo'. Oh, missy, *is* yo' all right?"

And down on her knees the little black girl fell beside the aching, bruised child, her brown hands wavering wistfully, tenderly over the bright bare curls, as if yearning yet dreading to touch them just once.

At the distressful tones, the child, forgetting her desire to rest, in the realization of another's trouble, got up a little stiffly, saying:

"Don't worry, little Rose. I'm all right now. Let's hurry back to the house."

It was an almost unusual experience for the child that night to have herself taken to task by every member of her household, from her father down to her doting mauma. But she felt that there was some compensation for her having run into danger when she heard her little black playmate lauded to the skies for the quickness of thought and action that had saved the life of the young mistress.

That year, when the time came for parting, there was a lump in the child's throat as she looked into the lonely black eyes longing for love, which looked back at her in the old wistful way.

"Rose," the little red lips uttered the words earnestly, eagerly; "Rose, how would you like to go to town with us and stay?"

The erect black figure shrank back as if in terror before the little solemn creature answered:

"Missy, I'd lub to go anywheys wid yo', but I'se

Those lonely black eyes longing for love

scared ob towns, 'cause dat's whey de silunce ees. No, missy; leel Rose don' want nuttin 'cept dat w'en yo' says dose leel pray's ob yo's ye don' forgit to put een: 'God bless po' Leel Black Rose, an' keep 'er out ob de silunce.' "

And so these two parted on that morning in the waning spring,—parted never to meet again. For God must have harkened to the white child's prayer for her faithful

black comrade of the woods; because, before another spring had come, all danger of the dreaded asylum was over. Little Black Rose had faded without suffering, and the solemn round eyes were closed forever.

VII

A LESSON IN PERSUASION

CONSTERNATION reigned in the well-ordered household in which the child had had the good fortune to be born. Cooky, the efficient ruler over the kitchen for more than a generation, —in fact, ever since the child's father had been a small boy,—had resigned her office, due to a late matrimonial adventure.

By the advice of her recently acquired spouse,—a man of hardly half her years,—Cooky had decided to establish herself in "de groundnut-cake business," as she styled it. To be sure, this was not a very ambitious venture, her establishment consisting of two stools set on a shady corner of a much-frequented street; upon one of which stools reposed a black tin waiter covered with straw-paper whereon were numerous flat little round cakes made of molasses and peanuts, or molasses and bene. Upon the other stool rested Cooky, clean in gay calico, radiant in lively-hued head-and-neck-kerchief, holding in one brown hand a small fly-brush, fashioned of long narrow strips of the straw-paper tied to a short stick, which she

"I sholy t'ank yo', mawsa." The foot was scraped backward noisily in an awkward attempt at a bow

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wielded gracefully above her wares in the intervals between sales.

Cooky's husband, having discovered the superiority of her groundnut-cakes over those of other manufacturers, deemed them a most profitable source of income, though he doubtless expressed his views more simply. And really, of all the delectable things the old cook had ever made to delight one's palate, none had ever given more satisfaction to the child and her little playmates than these very groundnut-cakes. How often, before she had left, had Cooky, when in an over-indulgent mood, graciously allowed the little white children to trespass upon her undisputed territory and there revel in the sticky delights of making those toothsome bits of candy themselves, while she called out her directions like a dusky demonstrator:

"Yo' fus' puts de 'lasses on de fire,—so. Now you let 'em come to a bile. Dey now, dat's all right. Yere's de dried orange peel, all chopped up fo' yo', chilluns. T'row 'em een. So; dat'll do; jes' a leel bit to flabor de t'ing. Now, let's see. De 'lasses done bile up t'ree times, enty? Yere's de groun'nuts all shell' an' parch'. Stir 'em een de 'lasses,—quick—quick, chile! Leggo, an' lemme do 'em fo' yo'; yo' han's tweenchy an' weak. Now de big lump o' butter,—so. Look out now; lemme git dey, chilluns,—lemme git hol' ob dat pot! Now, yo' see, I drops 'em on dis col' stone. An' soon's dey's cool, honey, yo' kin eat 'em wid de udder leel misses."

Thus keeping on with her instruction up to the last moment she would pour the molten mass in the form of little brown cakes bristling with nuts on the fair marble slab

which she had ready in the shady yard just outside the kitchen door.

But Cooky was gone now, and for a little while Andrew, who was quite a chef in a way, had tried to supply the cook's place until such a time as the epidemic of religion, caused by the progress of a colored camp-meeting in the parish across the river, should subside and restore some of the female religionists to their less spiritual occupation of cooks. Clarinda it was who finally came to the rescue of the child's mother by telling her one day:

"I'se got a 'quaintance, ma'am, dat's lookin' fo' a steady kitchen place. She am a fust-chop cook, an' a right good 'ooman, too. Me'n she belongs to de same chu'ch sassiety, de 'Weepin' Marys.' Ee say ee's puffickly sati'fy to sleep on de premises, but I mus' tell yo', ma'am, dat ee got a 'cumbrance."

"What sort of an encumbrance, Clarinda?" asked her mistress. "Of course if she has children, my employing her is out of the question."

"Oh, no, ma'am; ee ain' got no chilluns," chirped the maid in her bright voice; "ee ain' got nuttin 'cep' a husban'. But she say dat man mus' lib een de same place wid 'em 'cause de po' ole fellow am so ole an' so leetle an' so lazy dat ee can' do nuttin 'tall, 'scusin' ee sometimes 'suade Emma, dat's ee wife."

As the kitchen building had so many rooms, each opening independently by its own door upon the servants' yard, the child's mother had no objection to harboring this old husband of Emma's, especially as Clarinda had told her that he could "persuade" his wife,—whatever that

might mean. At any rate, it sounded like a good moral influence. And so Emma came to reign over the realm left without a head since Cooky's departure.

Nobody about the place paid much attention to the weazened, cowed-looking, undersized little Negro man who turned up quite naturally and unobstrusively at the servants' mealtime as well as at bedtime and who was known to everyone simply as "Emma's husband," much in the fashion of other unknown husbands of well-known wives the world over. It was, therefore, with some astonishment that the child's father one day, in strolling through one of the garden walks, was confronted by rather an abject little colored man who scraped his foot violently and kept nodding his bared head like a toy animal, in an evident desire to obtain speech with the lord of the house.

"Well, well," said the latter with good-natured impatience, wholly unaware of the identity of the person he was addressing, "what can I do for you?"

" 'Scuse me, mawsa; 'scuse me; but I'se Emma's husband,—Emma de cook, yo' know, mawsa."

"Oh, yes; of course; I remember now. What seems to be the trouble?"

"Nuttin' 'tall, mawsa; but I clean done forgot fo' ax yo' w'en I done move on de premuses ef yo' mine ef I 'suade Emma sometimes?"

The old darky cut short his remarks as if hanging breathless on the reply.

"Do you mean influence her to leave this family?" There was anxiety in the master's voice, for Emma had

turned out to be a treasure in a culinary way, and the loss of her would mean much.

"No, no, boss; no sicher t'ing as dat," returned the weazened individual, with a sort of deprecating chuckle. "I means 'suadin' 'em like a man hab a right to 'suade ee wife. Kin I, mawsa?"

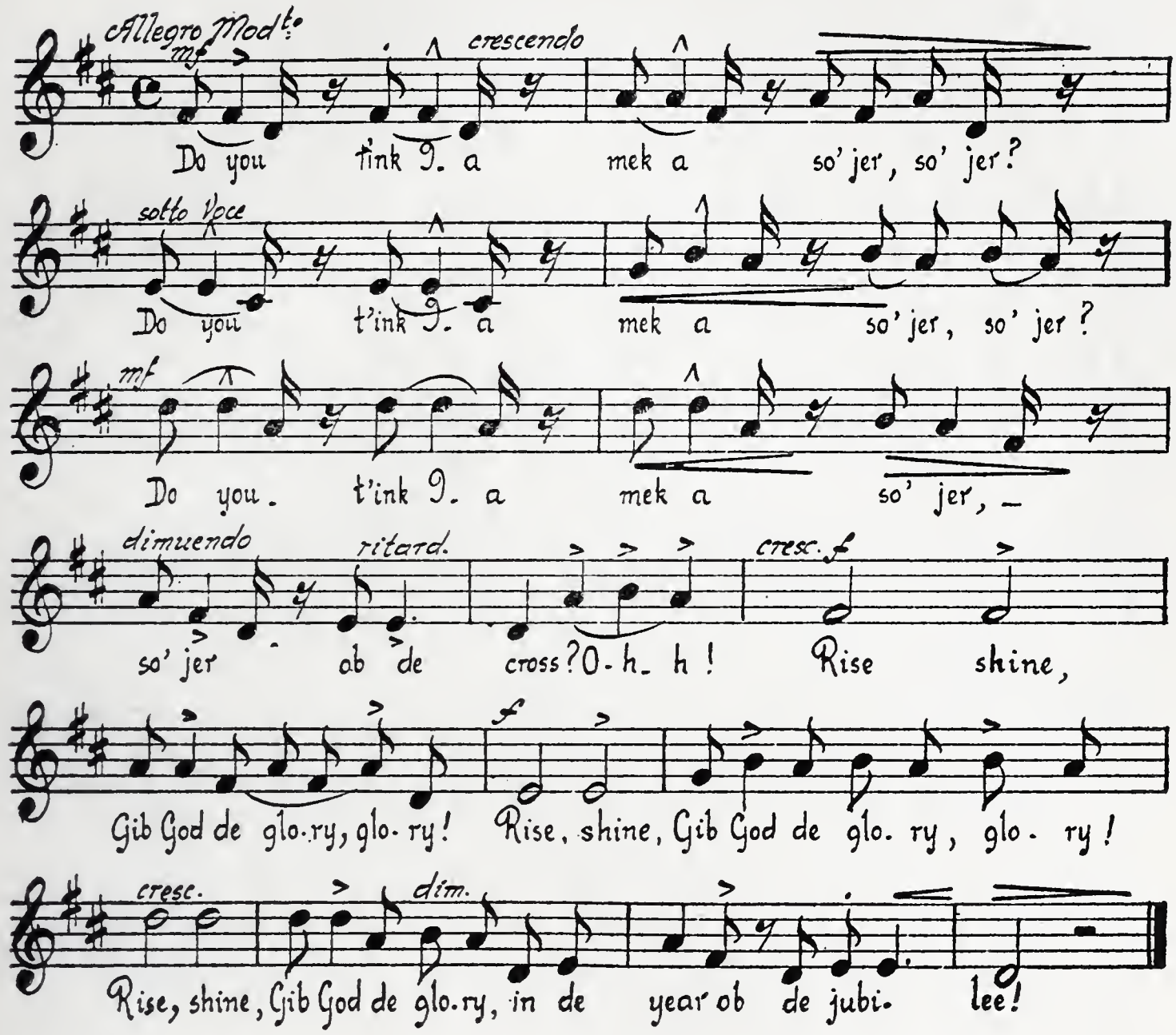
"You needn't ask such a question of me. I have made it a rule of my life never to interfere in family affairs, especially between husband and wife. You must do as you think best."

"I sholy t'ank yo', mawsa." The foot was scraped backward noisily in an awkward attempt at a bow. "I sho' ees glad I done ax yo' fust; *mighty* glad."

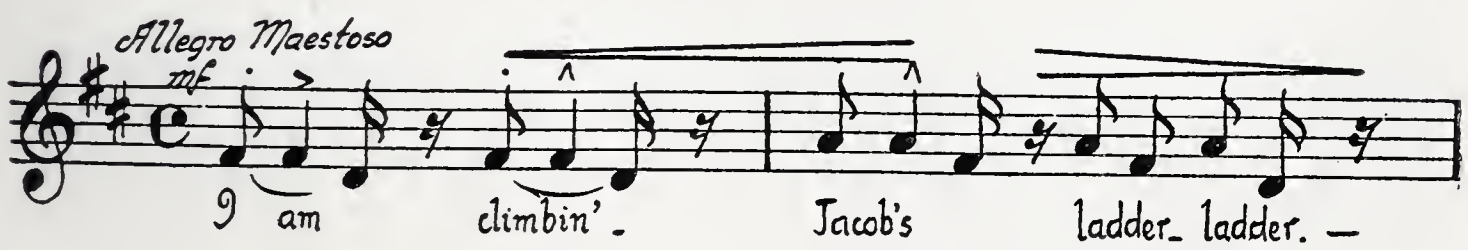
And the humble old figure shuffled away along the paths edged with jonquil and sweet olive, till his shambling presence was lost to sight behind the big mulberry tree in the servants' yard.

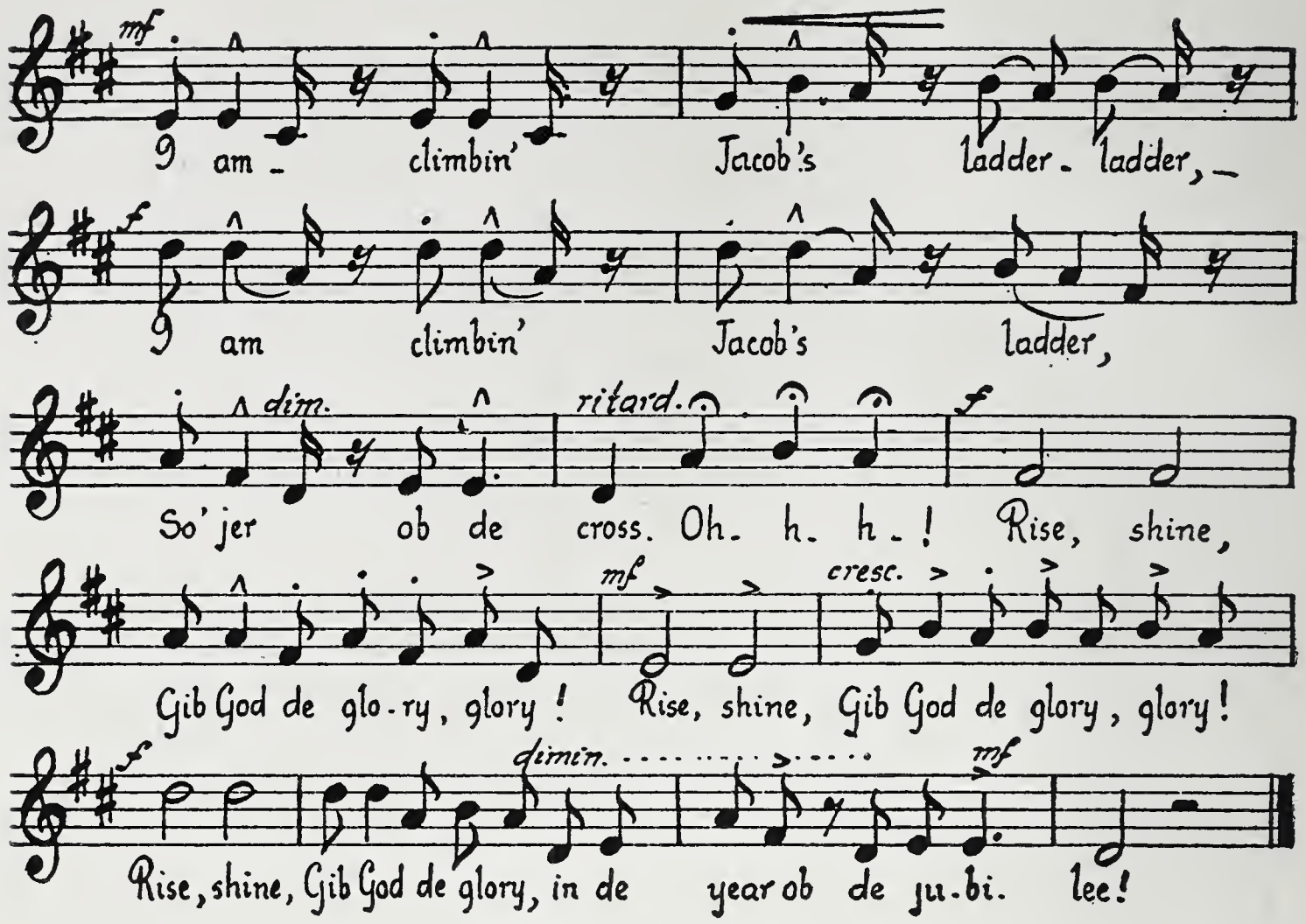
"How peaceful it all is!" breathed the child's mother contentedly to her husband, as they sat together just outside their bedroom windows on the broad upper piazza. There was nothing to break the tranquility of the drowsing world except now and then, when a fretful young bird would give a sleepy twitter in a nearby tree. "Wait a moment!—please don't go in yet! I've been hoping that the servants would begin to sing every moment. I love to hear the sounds at this distance,—so soft, yet so distinct. Listen!"

And just at that moment over the darkness came the notes, each word sounding clear through the gauzy spring air:

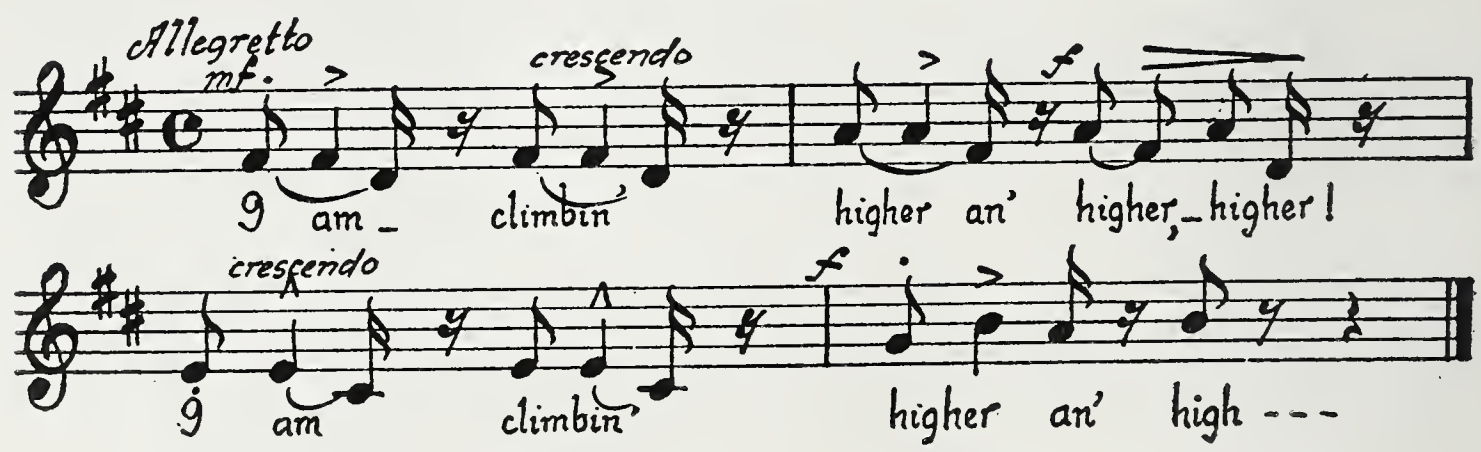


There was a slight pause after the first stanza, then a strong voice soon began another, in which the others all joined:





"How peaceful it all is!" murmured the husband, unconsciously echoing his companion's last words. As he spoke, the song was taken up again:



The music broke off raggedly, having been interrupted by a terrific whoop, followed by loud groans mingled with the sound,—dull, regular,—of blow on blow, pounding distinctly on the carrying air.

In alarm, the child's mother entreated her husband to hasten out to the kitchen (for the sounds seemed to emanate from that direction) and investigate this unusual occurrence. He, so urged, hurried down the stairs and out under the veil of moonbeams, to the servants' quarters. When he reached there, every colored person seemed to have sunk into the earth, for the big yard was deserted. But from the wide-stretched window of one of the rooms there were issuing subdued groans and sounds of earnest talking. As the child's father was about to approach that room, the door was opened from within and Emma's husband, his face betokening sweet amiability, introduced his insignificant figure into the night. He paused in surprise at the unexpected sight of the master of the house; then, remembering his manners, he pulled his shabby hat-brim and scraped his foot along the ground in respectful greeting. But the child's father was angry at such an unheard-of disturbance in his yard, and frowningly remarked:

"What have you been doing in there?"

"Doin'? Me, mawsa?" The fellow's air was innocence itself. "W'y, jes' wot yo' done tole me fo' do. Yo' see, fo' a long time now Emma she been 'streperous, an' I ain' like fo' 'suade 'em widout axin' yo' to lemme do eet. So, bein' as I done got yo' say-so today, I been een dey jes' now 'suadin' 'er wid a stick, like ee's use' to. Eet sho' was

hot wuk, so I done come out yere to cool off. Hope we ain' made no noise, mawsa."

The listener to this explanation could hardly express his astonishment at the rather violent mode of persuasion employed by the old man, so he simply said:

"I'm afraid you and I haven't exactly understood each other. Of course I hadn't the remotest idea that you meant to beat your wife. In matters like that I certainly do make it a point to interfere between husband and wife; and I must make it plain to you that there can be no more such exhibitions on my premises. If such a thing ever occurs again, you and your wife will have to go. I would make you go now but for the fact of your misunderstanding my permission. But in future there can be no mistake about my opposition to your methods."

" 'Course, mawsa; 'course I'se gwine do zackly wot yo' say. But, mawsa," cooed the weazened old creature in soothing deprecation, "yo'se too high up to onnerstan' 'oomans like my ole Emma. Ee's 'streperous,—scan'lous 'streperous,—w'en ee done hab ee own way too long. Ain't yo' neber heard ob Sollerman wid ee t'ree hunnerd wives? Dere was one ob dem 'oomans 'mos' as 'streperous as my ole 'ooman een dey. Dat wife ob Sollerman's ee name was Ann Tippy, or sumpin' like dat. Ee done 'suade dat 'ooman wid a stick befo' de whole t'ree hunnerd,—ee done 'suade 'er wid a stick 'cause ee got mo' scan'lous dan or'nary. An dat' all Sollerman eber haf fo' do to dat 'ooman. Yo' know dat man Sollerman was a wise man an' ee believe een de lash. Ef eet had'n' been fo' dat one ack ob Sollerman's een trashin' dat Ann Tippy ee would 'a been

" 'Course, mawsa, I'se gwine do zackly wot yo' say"

po'ing down wid de prespration to dis day mekin' 'temp's to mek de res' ob ee 'oomans 'have deyselves. . . . . mawsa, some 'oomans like horse. Let de horse hab ee own way, ee go all right fo' a leel time. Den all ob a sudden ee forgit dat yo'se got a lash 'tween yo' han's. Ee begin to cavoort, an' scatterfristicate wid ee feet. Ee tink ee'll run t'ings fo' eese'f. Ee done forgit dat w'ip, yo' see. Den down yo' brings de lash on ee back. Ee lose ee sperrit; ee don' cavoort no mo', ee don' scatterfristicate no mo'. Who yo' t'ink de boss now? An' dat's de way wid some kin' ob 'ooman folks, mawsa. Leabe off 'suadin' 'em wid a lash

a leel w'ile, dey tink dey'll run t'ings dey own way. Dey begins to cavoort, dey gits 'streperous. W'eneber yo' see dat kin' ob 'ooman git like dat, mawsa, dey's only one t'ing to do wid 'em—not dat I'se gwine do dat again to my ole Emma, now dat I done fin' out yo' ain' like eet—but still I say dey's only one t'ing to do to 'em: 'Suade 'em jes' like I done do Emma jes' now. Truf, mawsa, dat's de only way: 'Suade 'em!"

The child of the ruling race walked on, trusting, unafraid, in the care of the big black man

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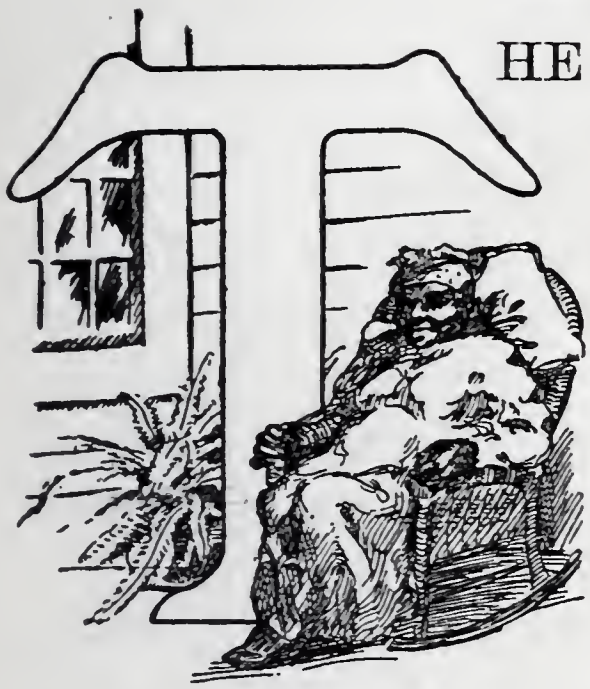
VIII

IN THE SHADOW



THE time was approaching when one day genuine grief was to come to the child,—the grief, deep, uncomprehending, of that first loss which whitens the rosy cheeks, which draws the baby lips into drooping lines for a time and robs the eye of merriment.

Gently at first they had let fall hints that she must soon part with her mauma, who had long been ailing; then, at length, the faithful old woman was compelled to give up her lifelong place as nurse-in-ordinary to the family. A sickness had overtaken her from which she seemed to have no power to recuperate, in spite of the careful way in which she had been tended at the child's home.

Finally "Daddy Jim," mauma's one son,—himself a man with graying hair,—came and besought his "young mawsa," the child's father, to let his mother come to his poor little home, that she might spend her declining days among those of her own color and blood. It would be such a comfort to him, he said, to look after his mother for the

little time that was left to her on earth. So, with tender reluctance, the child and her parents allowed the devoted nurse to depart.

From that time on the cheerful young Clarinda took charge of the nursery and, between her festive moods, she would indulge in dire hints of the coming end of the child's loved nurse. The very mystery of that thing that was called "the end" kept the little one in a state of emotional tumult, for she was of a strangely sensitive, fanciful nature, this child, owing largely, without doubt, to the early influence of that very mauma who had been one of the greatest forces that had governed her impressionable infancy.

Nearly two months had gone by under the new nursery *régime* when one day Daddy Jim, the old nurse's son, appeared to the child's mother.

"Miss Marie," he said, his chocolate-colored, middle-aged face full of trouble and pleading; "I wanter ax yo' a fabor. Ma don' say nuttin 'tall all de time w'en she do talk 'cept 'I wan' to see ma daater once mo' befo' I goes to meet ma King een Glory,—I wan' to see ma daater.' Nuttin 'tall seem to comfort 'em but dat I comes an' brings de chile today. So I done come, Miss Marie, jes' to beg yo' fo' lemme tek de leel missy,—I know yo' ain' well 'nough to bring 'er yo'se'f,—to see ma po' ole ma jes' once befo' she go. She ain' gwine las' long now, an' ef de chile don' come soon, ee be too late, Miss Marie,—ee be too late."

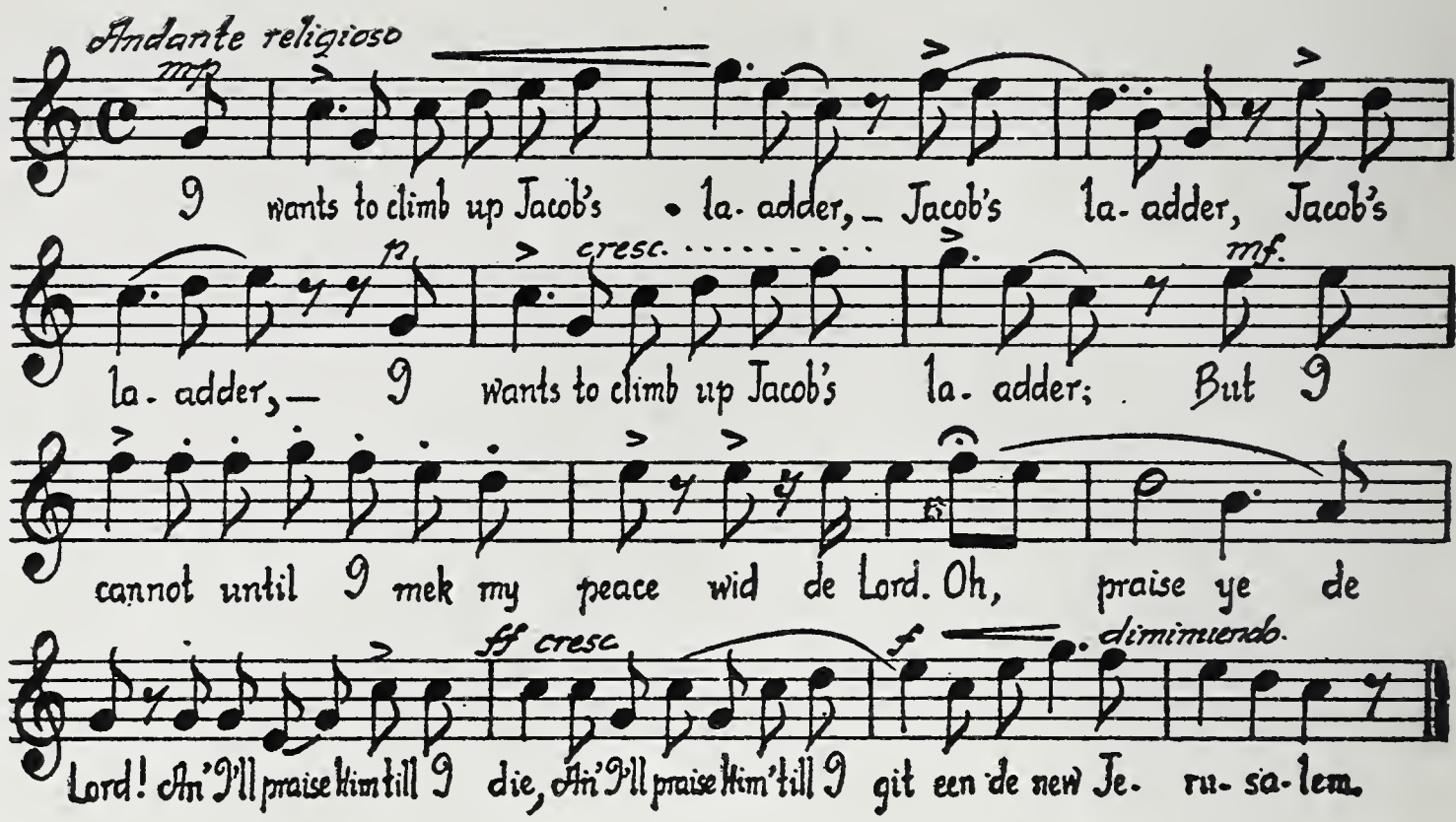
Without a moment's hesitation, her heart sensing the uncertain sorrow of an anticipated loss, the mother made known to the little girl how ill her mauma was and how

the old nurse longed to see her. All eager was the daughter to go. And in a few moments the child of the ruling race was walking off, trusting, unafraid, in the care of the big black man.

The sun was sending those long rays along the earth that tell of the near-setting when the two reached Daddy Jim's little dwelling. So still, so solemnly silent, was the air about the humble place that a glad bird's song far in the distance came clear and full, as if the brave little singer were perched upon the child's very shoulder and were pouring forth its liquid melody straight into her strangely sharpened ear. At a knock, Daddy Jim's wife quickly opened the shabby door that led on to the rather rickety miniature piazza, and her face beamed with dusky gratitude as she saw who stood before her.

"Dat's so good o' Miss Marie," was her greeting. "Ma jes' done say dat she feel her daater gwine come fo' see 'em. Walk een, missy, please. I hab to ax yo' fo' wait a minute on de piazza, 'cause de Rebrun Prentiss am wid ma jes' now, gibin' 'er de word ob peace dat'll help 'er to climb to de feet ob 'er blessed Maaster. Hark!"

As she spoke, low on the attentive silence fell a man's voice, on which broke fragmentarily a weak, wavering treble that the child with difficulty recognized as that of her once vigorous mauma. As the three just outside the window of the sick room listened, with heads bent in unconscious reverence, there came to the little one's ear the words and music of what she always remembered as her fond nurse's favorite hymn:



The last notes died, and the low murmur of a voice in prayer throbbed through the child's senses. Something, she knew not what, seemed to be holding her by her slender white throat, making her breath come raggedly. It was all so new, so unfamiliar, this initiation into the mystery of sorrow and death. She was glad when Daddy Jim, taking her protectingly by the hand, muttered softly, as a deep silence fell within the house:

"I reckon we'd bes' go eenside now to see yo' mauma, bein' as I'se done promise yo' ma to git yo' home befo' de daark faals, honey."

And he led her to the door of the close, low-ceiled little bedroom, out of which the "Rebrun" Prentiss was stepping, in all the sepulchral severity of rusty black frock coat and high black hat held with ministerial correctness in his brown left hand.

On the threshold, the child drew back resistingly, awed by the intangible shadow that seemed to lie over the room; but Daddy Jim's coaxing, kindly hand drew her onward until she stood within the narrow doorway.

"A-h-h!"

It was like a deep, heavy sob of perfect content that broke from the lips of the withered creature on the bed, as the dim eyes dwelt on the smaller of the figures silhouetted in the doorway.

"Oh, it's daater!—it's daater!" the feeble voice went on. "I knowed de blessed Lord wouldn't let my las' prayer go widout a answer. Come to yo' mauma, my lamb!" How the weak voice yearned to the child; how the hungry eyes feasted on her!

The little one, at the familiar call, moved with unnatural solemnity through the unseen shadow of the room toward the almost unrecognizable figure stretched there upon that humble snowy bed,—unrecognizable because the peaked head-handkerchief, so long the subject of speculation to the childish mind, had been laid aside, and the faded, lined brown face, resting upon the pillow there, was topped only with its natural covering of scattered, silvered, tightly-kinked locks. But the loving look that had ever been for the child was still beaming from those dimming eyes that followed every step of the little one's approach to the bed. Daddy Jim, feeling that these two did not need his nearer presence, stood in the doorway, mute, waiting.

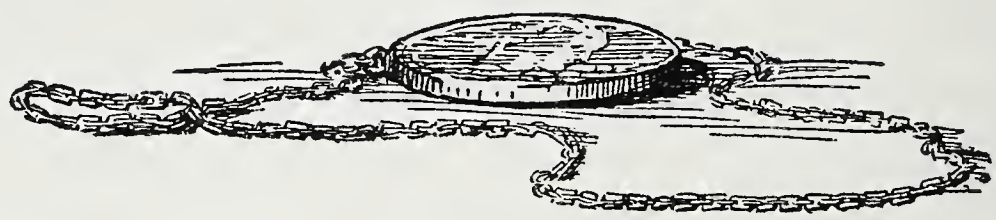
"I ain' gwine keep yo' long, ma daater." The words came in feeble gusts, with lulls of silence between, while

the child stood in choking wordlessness, her velvety little hand clutching with expressive tightness the old, work-worn, unanswering fingers of her nurse. "I jes' wan't to hab one mo' look eento dem sweet blue eyes,—jes' like a scrap ob Heaben deyselves. Den I'se got a leel sumpin' fo' yo',—sumpin' I wants to gib yo' mase'f, so yo' kin keep eet an' 'member yo' ole mauma by eet always—always."

Falteringly she raised her free hand,—for the child kept the right one fast,—and reached beneath her pillow. When she withdrew the hand she held something close within it.

"Here, ma daater; tek dis, please,—an' keep eet to 'member me by,—to 'member me by—always."

And the dying woman pressed into the child's hand her pathetic little bequest,—an old silver quarter of a dollar.



A cherished legacy

All uncomprehending what forces were robbing her of the power of speech, the little girl found that she could merely look her thanks from her brimming eyes, and make them known by strengthening the pressure on the feeble black hand she held.

Laboriously the failing voice dropped into words again: "Den dere was sumpin' else, honey, ef yo' don' mind. Eet done mek me so oneasy, dat eet seems like I can' sleep ma las' long sleep onless I done bless ma daater.

De las' blessin' ob de ole black 'ooman ain't gwine haarm yo', chile; an', sinful dough I be, de good Lord mought 'cline Ee ear."

There was an impressiveness about that moment that stayed with the child during the whole of her after life. The hand she had been holding was gently withdrawn from her detaining clasp, and in all its withered blackness was devoutly laid in loving benediction upon the golden head, while haltingly came the words in broken breaths:

"De good Lord bless ma daater; de good Lord mek ee light fo' shine—ee light fo' shine."

"Amen!" came in fervent response from the doorway. It was Daddy Jim's voice.

The hand upon the child's head grew lifeless, and finally slipped limply down, hanging heavily over the side of the bed. Awed, the little girl raised her eyes in startled fashion to the still old figure lying there with half-closed lids and with that transfigured look upon the weary, wasted countenance. She lifted the still hand tenderly and placed it upon the spotless coverlet. Tiptoing as does one who dreads to rouse an infant, she went softly toward the bowed black man waiting there in reverent attitude.

"Come, Daddy Jim," she whispered. "Let's go home now. I'm coming again tomorrow. Mauma's gone to sleep."

But the child did not yet understand that mauma had gone into a deeper sleep than she had ever slept before,—for she never woke again on earth. The boundless heart, the loving voice, the tireless hands, had now found rest: eternal rest.

Often afterwards, led by her father's hand, the child would go into the little burying ground of the colored folk, and seeking out one grave, would stand beside it and read on the enduring marble that her parents had had reared above her mauma's last resting place:

NELLIE RUSSELL

A FAITHFUL SERVANT AND A VIRTUOUS WOMAN

It was the first time the child could remember ever having heard her old nurse's name; "Mauma" had always seemed enough for her.

It was many a long day before the child grew to know exactly what the words of the second line of the inscription signified, but what she always did know was that beneath that stone lay one whom she had enshrined in her baby heart as the truest friend of her earliest days; and through all the future, laid up among the dearest of her girlish treasures, she has guarded ever with loving care an old silver quarter.

Stepping unsteadily up to the piano, he opened the book in his hand and laid it upon the music rest

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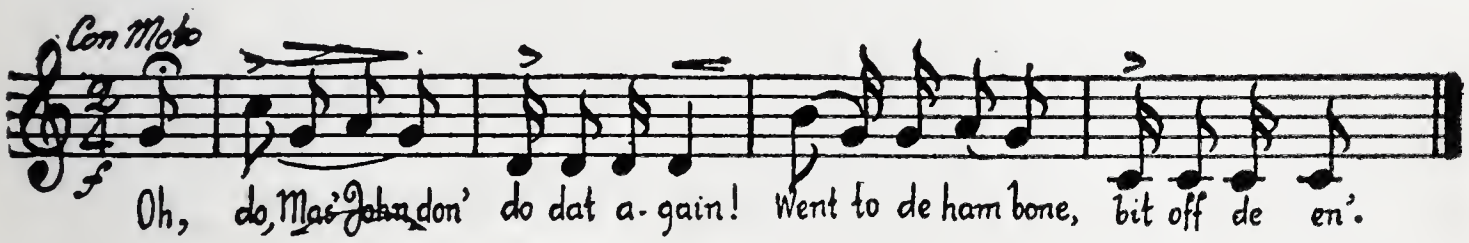
IX

DADDY WELLINGTON'S DEFENCE

THE child was all alone in the living-room. Lightly she lolled in the depths of a great green leather chair, like a lotus-flower on its leaf. She had been poring over a picture book in the soft warm lamplight on that early spring evening.

The numbing scent of the jonquil and hyacinth that threw forth their sweetness so prodigally out there in the garden, stealing in insidiously, had soothed her into drowsiness, when suddenly a low, quavering voice in the near distance broke upon her wavering senses.

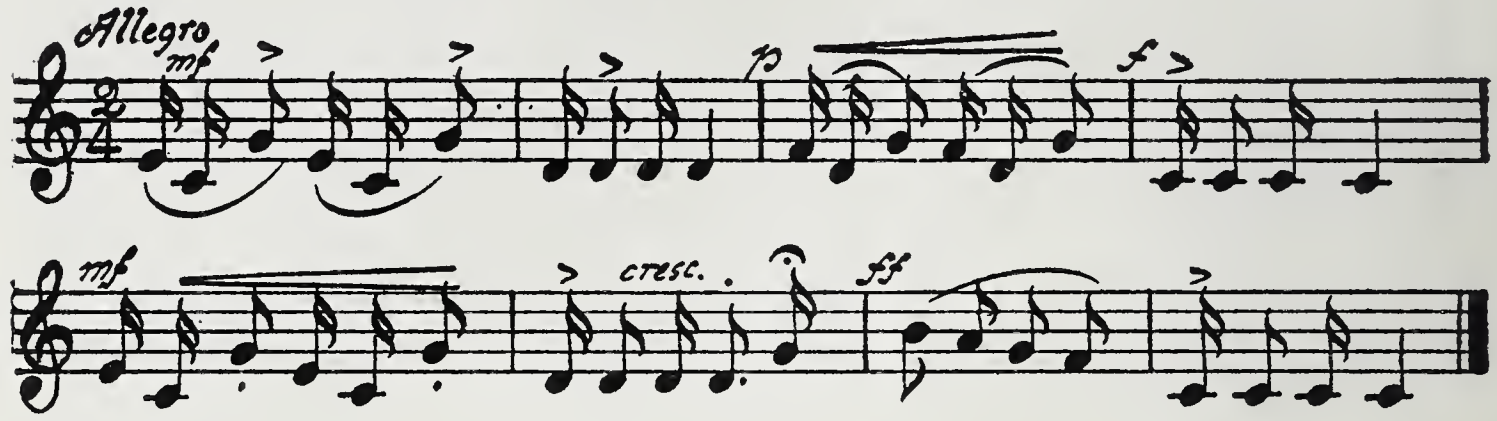


came the imploring words, to their gay melody.

The child started up alert, expectant. She ran eagerly to one of the long windows that opened upon the piazza,

wrinkling her brow and drawing together her eyelids in an effort to penetrate the soft silver powder of moonbeams that was sifted over the world without. But the light inside made her sight dim, though she had no doubt as to whose voice it was.

The song now broke into a roystering whistle, to the accompaniment of uncertain, shuffling footsteps:



The whistling, the shuffling steps, had been coming nearer and nearer, until now into the frame of light made by the window came the form of a very old Negro. He was staggering under the fulness of a basket he carried on his arm, combined with a sort of spirituous fulness contained within himself. Between his hands he held an old straw hat, which he revolved assiduously, as if suffering a perfect martyrdom of embarrassment.

At the sight of the dusky figure before her, the child uttered a laughing greeting:

"Why, I knew it! It's Daddy Wellington!"

She was always glad to see the old man, whose full name, bestowed upon him by his sponsors in baptism, was Julius Cæsar Napoleon Wellington Washington. But of these distinguished names, all had been forgotten but the

victorious two at the end. He was generally classed as one of the family servants, though wherein he served was a question, for he seemed to be like unto the lilies of the field in that he toiled not, neither did he spin. But, as he claimed the child's family as his own property, and as he had been allowed to live in the servants' quarters ever since she could remember, until recently, she had come to look upon him as being as much one of her belongings as were the other servants about the place. So she was almost on the verge of tears when her father and mother had decided that Wellington must leave the premises despite his piteous plea that he didn't know how he was ever going to "git enough vittles to feed a family ob fo'teen, 'scusin' de ole 'ooman. An' how is I gwine stan' libin in de yaards ob po' w'ite trash after bein' wid ma own folks all ma life?"

The cause of his fall from grace, though all unknown to the child, was, to use his own words, "De bottle hab been one too many fo' po' Wellington. Seems to git wusser'n wusser, too. Weneber Wellington teches licker now, ee ain' 'sponsible no mo'."

And so for this reason Wellington went, and the child grieved in her faithful way, though it must be said that he gave her no opportunity of forgetting him. In fact, never a week passed but he came to pay a visit to what he called "his folks," always going away rewarded in generous fashion for his attention in calling. He usually reported all well with his interesting family, telling the success his wife was making of what he styled "de washin' business." As for himself, he had never sullied his reputation for lifelong aristocratic tendencies, and dwelt in

lordly idleness rather than work for people whom he deemed inferior.

As soon as he heard the child's glad voice, Wellington, without entering, said a shade above a whisper:

"Yes, honey; eet's me, Wellington. I was jes' a-goin' by de gyaaden fence, an' I seed you settin' all 'lone een de brightness, lookin' so sweet an' comelier, so I t'ought I'd jes' drap een an' pay my erspecks. Dat's w'y I done slipped een widout gwine to de back gate. I t'ought dat ef yo' was all 'lone yo' moughtn't min' readin' ober some ob dese heems fo' me."

He stopped twirling his hat; and, putting one hand under his coat, drew forth a large bound volume of music; then went on to say:

"Disher book Gen'l Swayne done gimme dis bery blessed minute."

"Oh, how nice of him, Wellington! You know I'm learning the piano now, and maybe I can pick out the tunes for you, too," said the child, moving back into the cozy room, half library, half music-room.

"Wait a minute fust, chile. Tell me jes' once. Ain' nobody dey wid yo'?" breathed the old servant mysteriously.

"I'm all alone," returned the little woman fearlessly. "Mamma and papa have both gone out to dine, and the servants are all eating, 'way out in the kitchen. So, you see, there's nobody 'round but me."

"Now yo'se sho' dere's no mistake 'bout dat, honey? Yo'se sho' yo'se all 'lone by yoself?"

"Why, 'course I am," said the child with amiable

emphasis; then she went on, rather severely, seeming suddenly struck by his unnatural manner: "But you'd better go out to the kitchen and have Maum Emma give you something to eat."

In silent acknowledgment of the rebuke, the old Negro gave his little companion an apologetic, narrow-eyed look, and bending his head low in evident mortification at his social error, he rocked himself into the house. Stepping unsteadily up to the piano, he opened the book in his hand and laid it upon the music rest. It was rather an awkward effect he produced, trammeled as he was by the enormous handle-basket; because never for a moment had he let it leave his arm; it seemed, in fact, as if he would sooner have parted with that member than with its attachment.

Without another word, the child sat down on the piano stool, arranged her abbreviated skirts with an air of gravity and dignity wholly apart from her years, passed her hands in mimic absent-mindedness through her gleaming hair, then looked in puzzled fashion at the open page before her. An imperceptible pucker was forming itself between her faintly marked brows, when all at once she turned sharply around on the seat and said, her voice deep-pitched with astonishment:

"These aren't hymns at all, Daddy Wellington. It's awfully hard music. I could never pick out the notes."

"Not heems? Go 'long, missy. Ain' yo' fine dey *My Jesus Rise,* an' *Rockin' een de Golden Cha'iot,* an' *De Year ob de Jubilee?* Sholy dey's dey," cried the old darky as if her words had been a revelation.

"No, there isn't a hymn in the whole book," the child assured him. "See the cover. It says,"—she spelled out each word carefully before uttering it,—"*Classical German Songs.*" And she pointed to the title on the outside of the book, unmindful of the fact that Wellington was innocent of the polite art of letters.

"So 'tis!—so 'tis! Dat's zackly wot ee say!"—bending over the words that she was following with her forefinger,—"fo' de Lord, dat's wot ee is! An' Gen'l Swayne done tol' me dat dose was heems! I 'clar to gracious, missy, eet's jes' like wot Sent Paul say,—nobody can't beliebe mens, eben dough dey's w'ite mens." And there was no end of eloquence of gesture accompanying this burst of virtuous wrath. "An' so yo' can' play 'em? Ck! ck! ck!" —giving that queer little chirrup that holds a volume of pity when uttered by the Negro tongue.

"No," said the child regretfully. "It wouldn't be music if I played it. I only make noise, ugly noise, when I play *easy* things, and this——" Words failed her.

"Is dat so, true 'nuff? I'se pow'ful sorry, honey, dat dem ain' heems. I'se done tote dat book a long way, an' ee's heaby. Dat's wot ee is. Not speakin' ob dis basket wot mek me shut up like de hinges ob midnight. Ef yo' 'scuse me, leel missy, I'd lub to ondo disher basket w'ile I'se een de house, 'cause I'se been out doin' shoppin' fo' de ole 'ooman an' de chillun. Want to s'prise 'em wid wot I got. Yo' see, leel missy, Wellington been punishin' de bottle again, an' ee clean done forgot wot ee got yer. W'en Wellington drink ee ain' 'sponsible no mo', an' ef ee go home an' can' gib de ole 'ooman a true'n true 'count ob wot he

done buy fo' dem all, dat ole 'ooman gwine see de sha'p edge ob de whisky de fust breat' Wellington done draw eenside ee do'. *Kin* I open eet, honey?" With insinuating pleaing came the request.

"Why, of course you may, Daddy Wellington. Put it right down on the table. I'm sure mamma won't mind."

Before availing himself of this resting-place, the old Negro cautiously asked once more:

"Yo' sho yo' don' hear nobody 'bout, honey? I'se so scared somebody mought follow me an' t'ief wot I done buy."

The child laughed his fears away so successfully that in a few seconds the cover was off the basket and the servant was removing the wares within with a look on his face expressive of expectant, pleasant surprise rather than any other feeling. As each neatly store-folded parcel was undone and examined, a chuckle of self-satisfaction sounded back on the old man's tongue, as if at the judiciousness of his purchase. He seemed to think that explanations of the purpose of each object were in order, for he talked on continually:

"Hum-m! Candy! Wellington always buys candy fo' de babies. Dat's all right. Now let's see wot's een dis paper. Shoes! Nice, fine ones. Now lemme t'ink who I buys 'em fo'. Bein' a little drunken, I ain' 'sponsible jes' now; but I t'inks dey'll fit two ob de gals, bein' dey's two pair. An' wot's dis? A whole piece ob cloth! Won' dat pure dazzle Cynthia's eye? I done promise her a decoy dress dis long time, 'cause she's big 'nough to go courtin' now, bein' mos' een ee eighteen year. Wellington sho' ees

a t'oughtful nigger. Hello! disher bun'le mighty on-familiar-like. Don' jes' 'member wot's een disher one. Oh, yes!" As he undid the wrappings, "dat's de clock I done tol' de ole 'ooman she was gwine hab one o' dese days. Won' she be s'prised dough; won' she, leel missy?"

And so he went on, talking as he removed the goods, unwrapped them, then restored each thing to its paper cover before placing it methodically on the table before him. A bonnet, some collars and a lot of odds and ends, showing almost a feminine thoughtfulness in the buying, were exposed to view in this way, and once again modestly concealed. Wellington had reached the bottom of his ample basket and was now holding in his hand the last of his wares. As the wrapper came off, a great ball of worsted of the most forsaken shade of green burst into sight. The child, at the first glimpse she caught of it, exclaimed:

"Daddy Wellington!—Daddy Wellington! What are you ever going to do with that green worsted?"

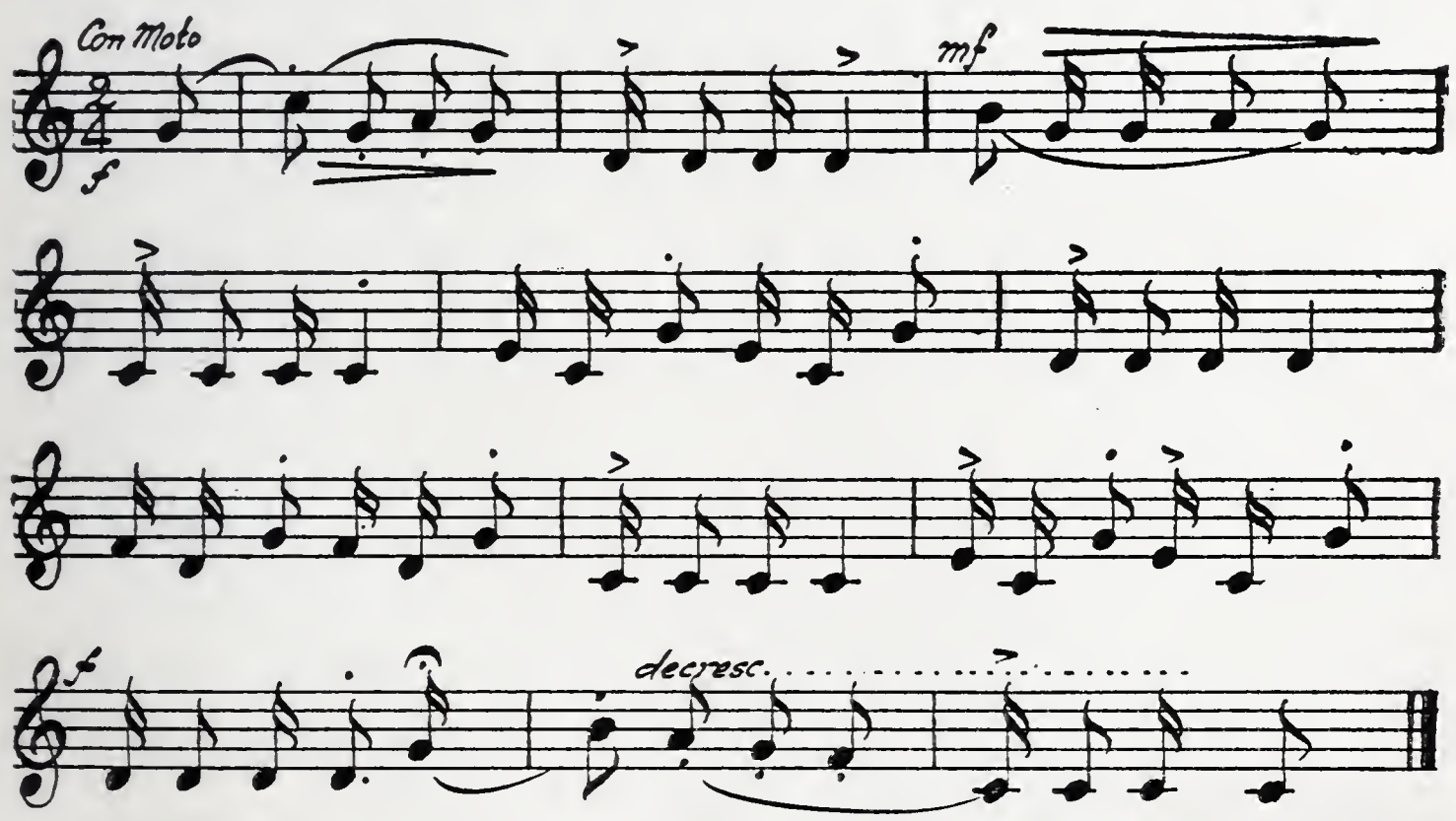
"Wot I'se gwine do wid 'em, honey?" He repeated the question as if in an effort to gain time. "W'y didn' yo' know I'se a fus'-class knitter, missy? I'se gwine knit sacks fo' de baby. Dat baby she done need sacks dis long time, an' I ain' nebber hab de money to buy 'em yet. But de Good Book da say 'De Lord Ee temper de wool to he sho' lamb.' My baby's de sho' lamb, an' dah's de wool. Ainty, leel missy? An' de color don' mek no diffunce. Cullud complexion kin stan' any color. So Wellington don' bodder 'bout dat."

And the old man, with a satisfied air, added the green wool to the already proud array of parcels on the table.

For a long time he looked in silence on the pile, as if considering the effect it would produce on the many eyes at home; then, before restoring the things to the basket, he said:

"Hm—hm; de ole 'ooman she be s'prised. Neber'll know dat I'se a leel bit drunken. Dat's all right. Ain' forgot nobody; 'membered 'em all—'membered 'em all."

In a little time the basket was packed, and with copious thanks to the child, Wellington moved toward the French window through which he had come. Searchingly his eyes scoured the outer world lying there under its light mantle of moonlight. Then, as if reassured, he shuffled away, whistling, with the tune sounding ever fainter as he walked down the fragrant garden paths:



This little incident had happened in the spring. Long weeks and months passed, and there was no sign of Well-

ington. It was the end of an autumn day, one of those fall afternoons so common in the South when, despite the lateness of the season, the caress that the air leaves upon the lips makes the breath come pantingly; it is so warm and lingering.

The child was passing through the garden when she caught sight of a woe-begone, dried-up, old coffee-colored face looking bashfully at her through the iron railing. She cried out gladly:

"Oh, it's Daddy Wellington! Come in! We'll all be glad to see you! Come in!"

The old Negro scraped his way along the garden path, shamefacedly twirling his battered hat. The child hastened to meet him. As she reached him, he said:

"No, no leel missy; yo' mustn't shake han's wid me. I'll come een, but I ain't fitten to."

"Nonsense, Daddy Wellington! Don't mind the clothes! We'll give you some old suits of papa's. I just want to know why you haven't been near us all these months. I've missed you."

"Tain' de clo'es, ma honey—tain' de clo'es." Wellington dragged the words out in very meek accents.

The child, impatient to get an answer to the rest of her question, repeated:

"Where have you been all this time? Tell me!"

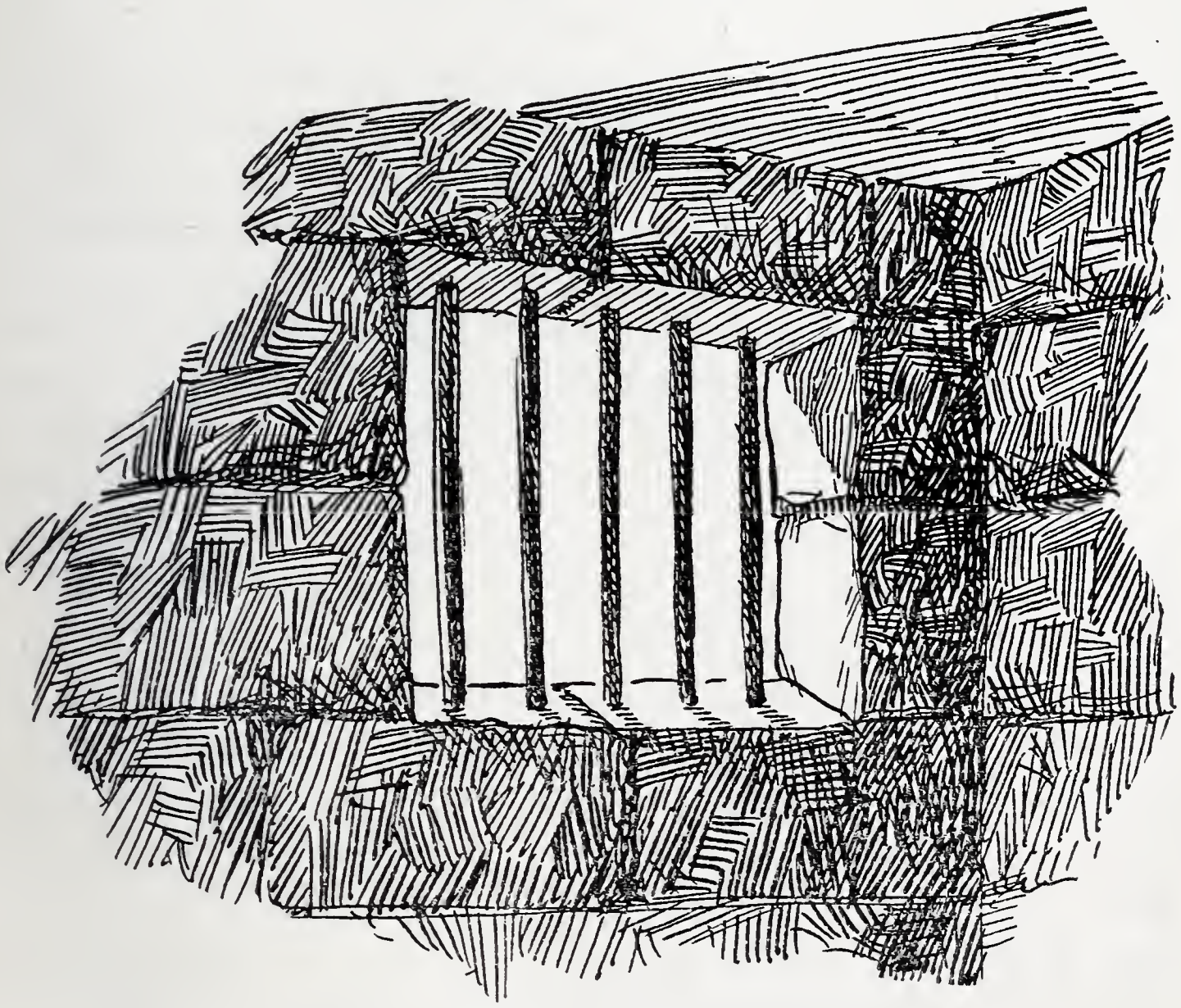
"Up de country." He seemed unable to control his tongue beyond the utterance of those few words. He felt they would surprise the child. They did.

"Up the country?" she cried. "What were you doing there? Working?"

"Sorter," came the laconic reply after a pause during which the old man tried hard to seem at his ease.

"Who were you working for?" She went on, interrogating, determined to have her black friend give a full account of himself, even if she had to drag it out piecemeal.

"Um-m-m!—nobody in 'tickler!" Then, his reserve suddenly leaving him, he tripped the words over one another in his haste to unbosom himself. "Honey, de reason Wellington ain' fitten to breathe de same breat' wot ee



The reason for Wellington's absence

leel missy breathe' ees disher: Wellington been all dese mont's een de 'tentiary."

"What! in the penitentiary!" the child fairly screamed, recoiling from the figure before her. She was not exactly sure of what a penitentiary was, but it sounded sinister.

"Ah, don't do dat; fo' God's sake, don' do dat, leel missy! Don't tu'n 'way an' look at yo' ol' Daddy Wellington like 'at,—Daddy Wellington, dat would let yo' walk on ee haart, ee naked haart, ef so be yo' want to. Twarn't ee fault. Wellington done mek so by de Lord dat ee can' leab' licker 'lone. *Do* haarken to me, leel missy, an' Wellington tell yo' how 'tis! Yo' 'member dat night I done come yere wid de basket, don' yo', honey?"

"Yes, yes!—the night you bought presents for the whole family, and forgot nobody?"

"Jes' so—dat's de bery blessed night. Well, I leab' yere, yo' know. I git een de street. Who's stan'in' outside de big gyaaden gate but a ole 'ooman, po' buckra; jes' w'ite trash; not lak we all quality folks. She hab a p'liceman wid 'em. Jes' so soon as she clap 'er eyes on me she say: 'Dat's heem. Dat's de bery nigger wot come eento de sto' when I was buyin' de t'ings.' I don' let 'er say no mo', 'cause I'se 'fraid she'll say I done t'ief 'er basket, so I hollers out: 'Look yere, 'ooman, dis ain' none ob yo' basket! Dis basket done b'long to me, Wellington Washington!' But dat p'liceman, ee won' take de po' nigger's word befo' dat w'ite 'ooman's say-so. He trot me to de gyaard-house. I tells dem dat Wellington been techin' licker an' neber knowed de diffunce 'twixt dat basket an'

ee own. Dey don' listen—dey *won'* listen. Udder pussons come an' mek 'cusations 'gainst po' Daddy Wellington. Dey say ee done t'ief heaps o' udder t'ings. Dey tote dis po' nigger to de cote house. Dey say een ain' no common t'ief—ee done do some grand kind of t'iefin. One man say dat Wellington better plead guilty—dat ef ee do dat, t'ings go easy for 'em. Chile, twarn't no sich a t'ing,—no sich a t'ing. I pleads guilty. An' after Wellington done do dat, —done 'cuse eeself een de public cote ob something ee dunno wedder ee done or no—yo'd haadly b'lieb it, honey, —but dey sends dis po' critter to de 'tentiary. An' dere ee hab fo' wuk an' wuk at all kinder t'ings wat ee neber wuked at befo'—bein' a quality pusson. An' oh, missy, all dis dun happen 'cause de bottle am one too much fo' 'em. I dunno how 'tis, honey. I mought 'ave t'iefed dat basket, an' den again I moughtn't; but howsomeber dat be, eet's jes' wot I done always say befo'—to yo' pa, an' yo' ma, an' everybody. W'en Wellington been techin' licker ee ain' 'sponsible no mo'—no, my leel missy; po', po' Wellington ain' 'sponsible no mo'."

X

A SON OF MARS

IF there happened to be one thing that Cupid Greene did more energetically and with more pride and diligence than tend the flowers in the child's garden, it was the drilling during one eventful autumn of his recently-formed military company of brilliantly uniformed darkies.

Emancipation Day was near at hand,—the day when all the colored troops of the town and the adjacent parishes were in the habit of parading through the streets to martial strains, afterward passing in review before the Adjutant General for inspection as to their fitness for service,—and it was Cupid's ambition to lead his matchless men to the favorite tune of the Tugadoo Fife and Drum Corps, the first bars of which were usually sung by everybody of color who heard the strains, in this dialectic style:

Merrilly stepped the Jefferson Zouaves to tunes that their musicians affected

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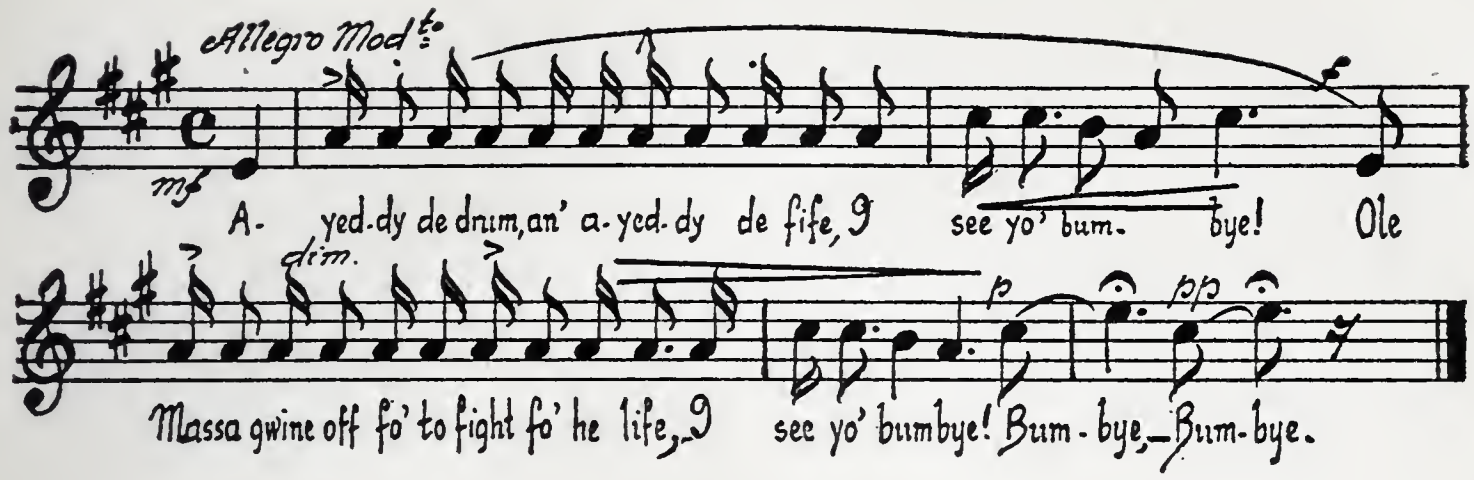


As was just said, this company had only recently been organized, and though there had been several candidates for the office of captain (indeed, every private panted to be an officer of one sort or another), the honor had been bestowed upon Greene. There was only one other who had stood the remotest chance of election,—an elderly Negro from Virginia, named Jim Mason, who claimed the office as his right, on the plea of his having been body-servant to a colonel of distinction on the Confederate side during the whole of the War Between the States. This Jim Mason had argued his own cause at the first spirited meeting of the company, winding up, as he supposed convincingly, in these words:

"*I* knows dat I knows all 'bout de ahmy. My ole mawsa knows dat I knows, an' God knows dat I knows; an' wot I wants yo' to tell me, ma mens, ees ef I dunno all 'bout eet, who ob yo' all does? Warn't I de body-servant ob de bigges' cunnel een de whole war, Marse Willie Osborne? Warn't I wid eem all de time? Didn't him an' me sleep togedder an' talk 'bout regimen's an' t'ings like two brudders. W'y, mens, all yo' hab to do ees to go to Petersbu'g an' ax anybody dey 'bout me. Dat's wot I say:

Ef yo' don' beliebe me, go right up to Virginyah an' ax de fus' man yo' meet ef ee dunno Jim Mason an' all ee done een de war. W'y, bless you haart, my mens, everybody een dat town knows me an' ma doin's as well as dey knows de Appomattox Riber. Jes' ax 'em."

But as verification of the sort suggested by Mason was out of the question, he lost the fight, and the honor was bestowed upon Cupid Greene, who claimed it by hereditary right, he being the only one present who could boast of a progenitor of assured martial connections. It seems that his father, Jerry Greene, had been the man cook of the child's maternal grandmother at the time that half the non-combatants of the South had taken refuge in Columbia. Having been left in charge of his "Ole Missis" by his "Ole Mawsa," who was off at war, Jerry was faithful even unto the time when Sherman passed through the town, sleeping like a watchdog outside of his mistress' bedroom door and testifying his devotion to his self-imposed trust in many fashions, self-imposed; for his last words to his master, months before, when the latter had gone to join his command, had been:

"Mawsa, yo' kin res' yo' haart easy w'en yo' leabe my missis een ma chaarge an' go 'way an' fight dem mis'able Yankees. An' w'en yo' git home again, yo' be sho I'll gib 'er back to yo' safe an' soun'; safe an' soun', mawsa, wid de Lord's help."

But on the morning of the departure of the Federal troops from Columbia, when the child's grandmother had opened her bedroom door, Jerry had flown, leaving be-

hind wife, children, of whom Cupid was the most tender of years, and every trammeling tie.

It appears that this defection on the hitherto reliable Jerry's part had all been due to the too eloquent praise of General Logan, who, with his staff, had come into the kitchen and had partaken of a chicken dinner prepared in Jerry's inimitable style. As the city's gas works had been blown up, the child's grandmother was fully aware of her black cook's vicarious hospitality, for the old slave, in order to have any illumination at all for the improvised banquet hall, had been compelled to come to her for a box of candles,—at that time priceless,—which she had stored in her very bedroom. Little did she think that that would be the last occasion on which she would ever behold the always trustworthy servant. What might have been the inducements that General Logan and his officers used to persuade Jerry to desert could only be guessed at from the confused reports of the other servants to their mistress, but the inference was that his vanity as a cook was so flattered that he consented to throw his fortunes with the Northern army; and from that night the country of his birth saw him no more.

It was on such a quicksand that Cupid Greene, the infant whom, with many other offspring, Jerry had deserted, founded his claim to military preferment, with the result that he became captain of the Jefferson Zouaves. The name "Jefferson" had been chosen by acclamation, because someone had told the unlettered dusky sons of Mars that Thomas Jefferson was the author of the Declaration of Independence. That document was a sealed

book to them, but the word "independence" suggested freedom, that new condition of the race, the very thought of which filled nearly every Negro heart with a sense of pride. But how those colored men came to know of the immortal Jefferson's French tendencies was a mystery. Perhaps it was only a random shot, after all.

When in uniform, gaudy in red and blue and yellow and white, with the brilliant pantaloons flopping and bellying in the breeze, and the diminutive fez giddily topping each coffee-colored head, Cupid knew in his heart of hearts that he and his men were a sight fit for the gods. His faith in the irresistible "get-up" of his Zouaves was not shaken even when frivolous black Clarinda, as she caught sight of him dressed in full regimentals and carrying a sword of proportions, strutting importantly out of the back gate, called after him with what was meant for cutting scorn:

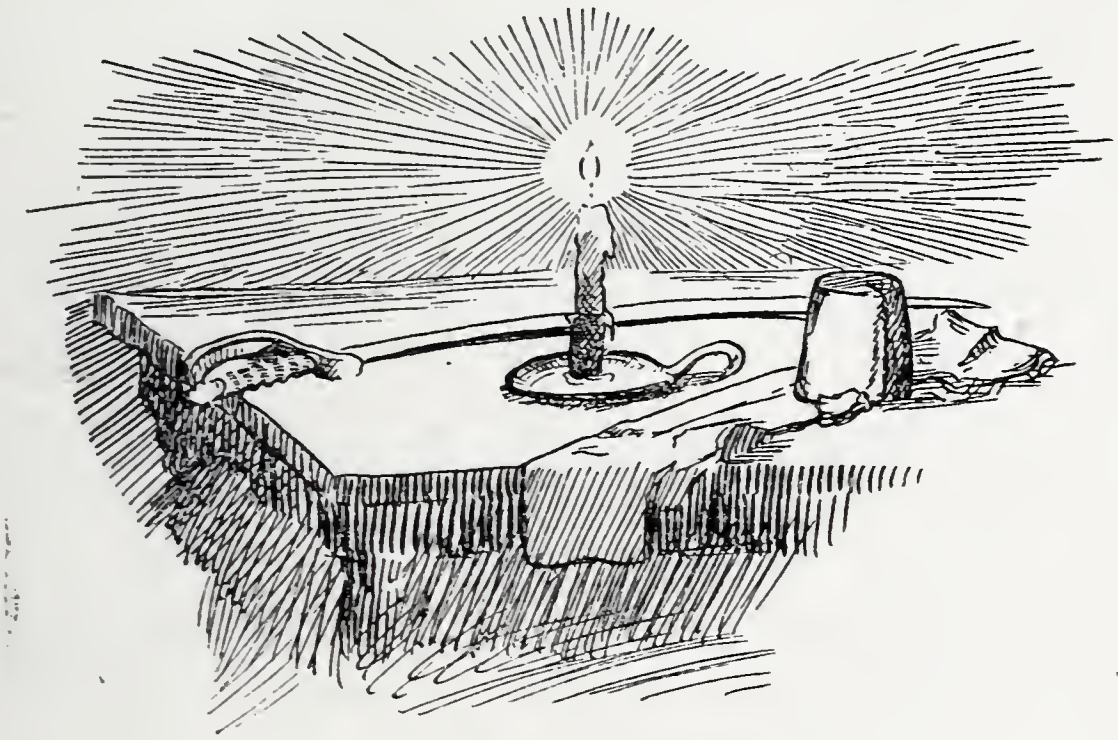
"Shuh, yo' needn' walk so brash, Cupid Greene! All yo' needs now ees a han'-organ an' a tin cup to mek yo' a true-nuff monkey." And she laughed derisively, to cap her words.

But as it was a well-known fact that Clarinda's swain was a member of a less gayly caparisoned military organization, Cupid, with supreme self-satisfaction, laid her annoying criticism at the door of envy.

At length the eagerly awaited Emancipation Day arrived, and joy with it, in the Negro world, but especially in the bosom of Captain Greene. There was nothing at that period that had the power so to gladden the black man's heart as the donning of a uniform of a bold and riotous color-scheme and in marching in pompous parade to the

ring of the brass and the bang of the drum through admiring lines of those of his own hue.

At peep o'day on that January morning, the Jefferson Zouaves, by command of their captain, met in the open highway for final drill and instructions preparatory to joining the line of parade that, several hours later, was to move on to be inspected by the Adjutant General and other



Proud bits of panoply

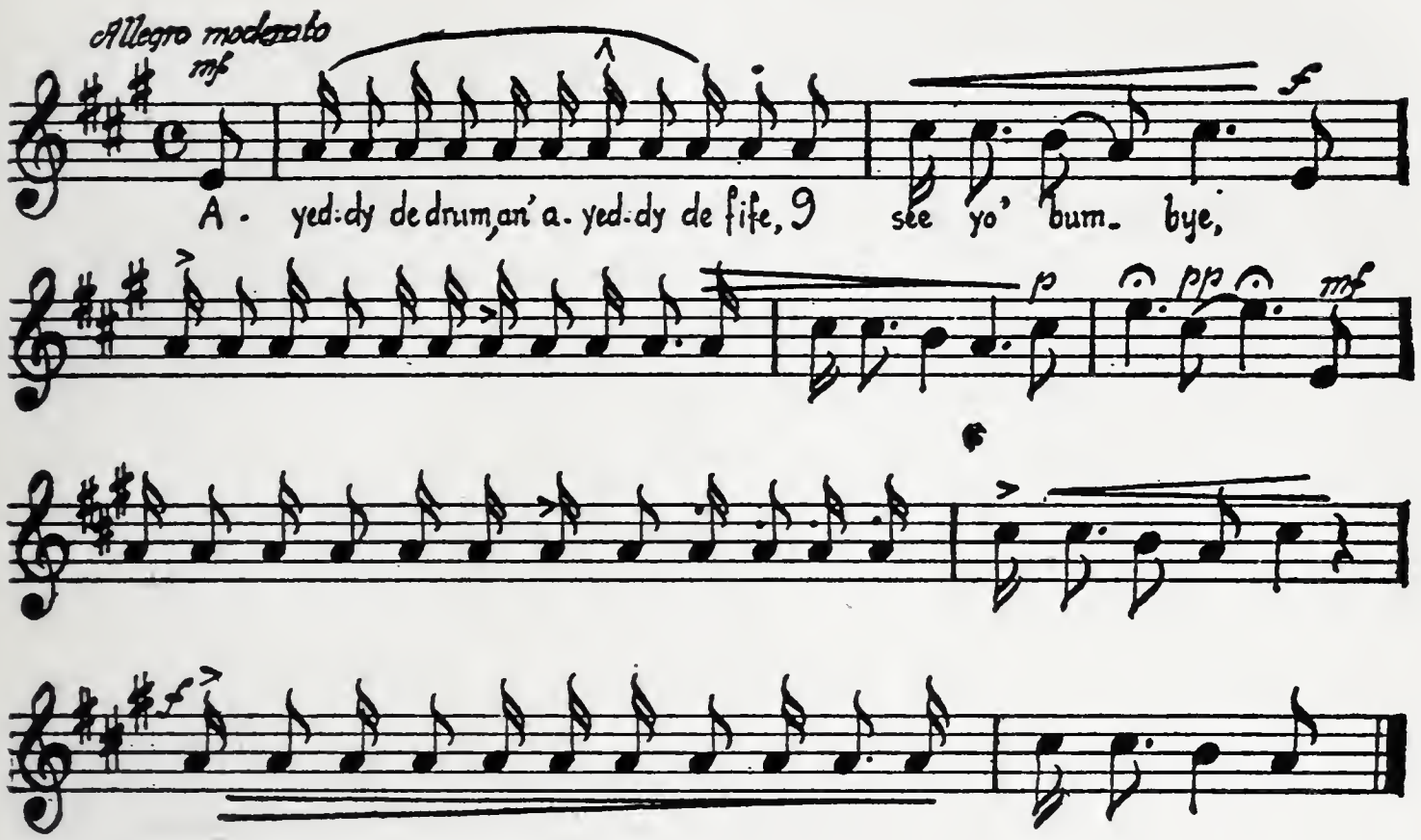
officers at the end of the march. One by one the members of the Zouaves had turned up at the rendezvous, resplendant in their many-colored uniforms, with bayonets gleaming at the end of their sturdy little muskets; and Captain Greene glanced proudly at their gorgeous raiment before he proceeded to carry them through their paces, with wild wavings of his mighty sword and commands unheard of in manual or tactics.

" 'Tention, comp'ny!" he would shout lustily. "Did yo' hear me, yo' mis'able black trash? I done say ' 'tention!' " Then, rolling his flashing black eyes hither and yon along the ragged line of his soldiers, he remarked reproachfully: "Now, jes' look at dat,—jes' look! Right dress!" he bawled upon that.

That order could not have been carried out to his entire satisfaction, for he wielded his shining weapon threateningly in warlike fashion and proceeded to swoop down upon offenders who hurt his precise eye.

"An' yo' calls dat a right dress?" he sneered witheringly. "I'd like to know wot yo' means by dressin' like dat! Git een dey wid dat ondecent stomack ob yo's, Cæsar Monroe; git een! Don' yo' heah wot I say?" And, to enforce his command, Cupid sharply whacked the organ of which he had spoken, sharply with the broadside of his sword.

It was at the end of several hours of this laborious and careful disciplining of his Zouaves that Cupid Greene deemed them to be in satisfactory form; and, with the certainty of their reflecting credit upon their commanding officer, he fell in at the end of the long Negro procession, behind the whistling and rattling instruments of the locally renowned Tugadoo Fife and Drum Corps. Merrily stepped the Jefferson Zouaves to the tunes that their musicians affected, and these were but two: one the well-known *Do, Marse John,* and the other:



The Zouaves had become much puffed up with praise before they had reached the reviewing stand, because the glowing encomiums on their brawling uniforms, and cries of delight from admiring femininity along the line of march, were warranted to increase the self-esteem of even the most humble-minded among them. So the intoxication of laudation had risen to the head of each member of the gallantly arrayed Jefferson Zouaves long before the end of the march. Indeed, Captain Greene began to think that he individually was the whole pageant. After a time, he even forgot to look to his men, whose heavy unfamiliar muskets and gay baggy apparel began to be a burden to them. The bayonets, at the beginning held so precisely, moved raggedly in the inharmonious swaying of the company; and as it drew near the stand, the Adjutant General

blinked at the dazzling irregular flash of the weapons in the wavering winter sunlight.

As the reviewing stand was reached, Cupid, who had been sparing his voice for this occasion, suddenly becoming mindful of his men, called out in stentorian tones:

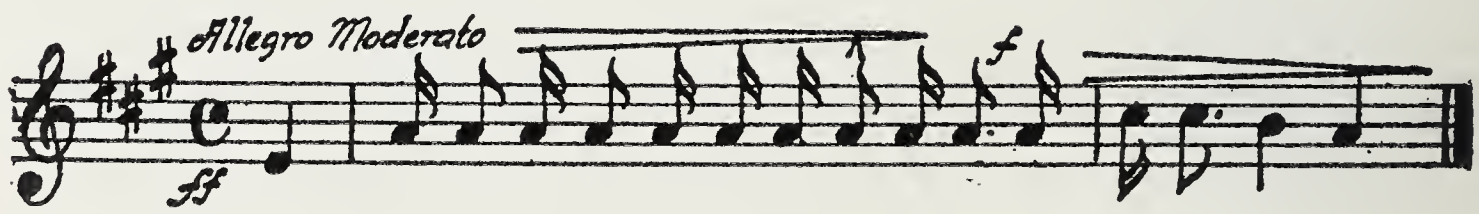
"Halt!"

The order executed, Captain Greene, elate at his success in stopping his men, and certain now of results, performed a heel-and-toe movement unprecedented in the annals of the National Guard, and sent forth his robust voice full of assurance:

"Right face!"

The result was chaos. Some of the Zouaves turned their heads in one direction, some in another, helplessly, uncertainly; some backs were rudely represented to the officers on the reviewing stand, others of the soldiers faced it brazenly; all the muskets were quivering, their bayonets waving and splashing like broad bands of rain in the dazzling daylight. Captain Cupid Greene's eyeballs fairly bulged at the appalling sight.

"Look yere, yo' black trash," he called most unofficially in somewhat lower tones than he had used a moment before, even though he thought that the squealing of the fifes as they played



had drowned his voice; "ain' yo' done on'erstan'?" And he strained his throat to enforce his next words: "Right face!"

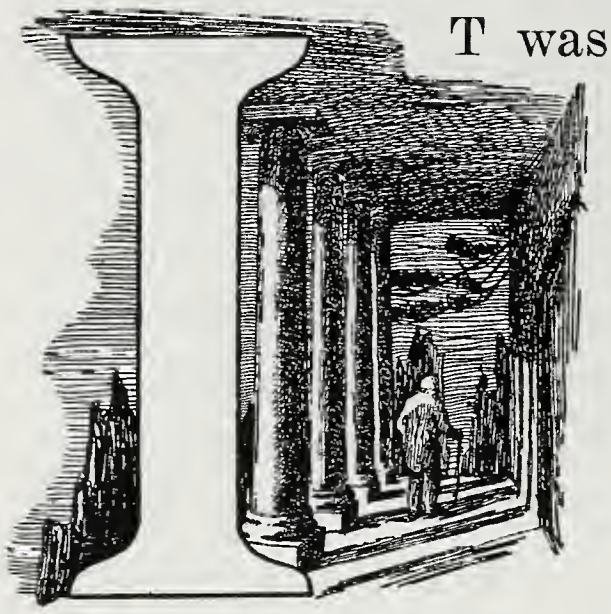
Each Zouave, feeling that his special move had been wrong in the first instance, attempted to correct it by simply reversing it, so that the general effect remained about the same. Cupid, seeing that the impression he had so fondly hoped to produce upon the Adjutant General was resulting in disaster, was beside himself with chagrin. With one final effort at command, he waved his sword threateningly, eloquently, and cried out on the waiting air:

"What yo' mean by doin' dat-er t'ing? Yo'se a libin' disgrace to de milishy! Ef yo' mis'able, good-fo'-nuttin, no-count, low-down niggers can' on'erstan' plain English, *kin* yo' on'erstan' *dis* order? Turn yo' backs to dem houses an' yo' faces to de middle ob de street an' look squar at de Giner'l an' dem udder w'ite gen'lemens."

The demoralized company did as so explicitly directed, but it was for the first and last time. From that day the Jefferson Zouaves ceased to exist, and Cupid Greene's hereditary career as a son of Mars was forever at an end.

XI

A LAST MEMORY



IT was a perfumed night of early summer,—a summer long afterward,—for the gleaming infant yellow of the child's hair had deepened into a shimmering brown. She had grown to be a woman now.

She was sitting all alone on the great old piazza where the golden-hearted roses nodded in at her in sweet greeting as they swayed and swung in climbing upward. Her thoughts were wavering,—wavering between the time gone by and the new.

Far below the young girl, at the foot of the long flight of steps, lay the garden, richer, deeper-scented, denser than when it had been her favorite playground in the old childish days. There it slept under the night's powdery light, a light that made it seem as if the moon were a great powder-puff sprinkling the world with fragrant, gleaming dust.

Pictures of the young woman's childhood, indelibly stamped upon the sensitized plates of her brain, came one by one before her, as from the distant servants' quarters,

The bent form of the old waiting-man, Andrew, moved slowly toward her along the piazza

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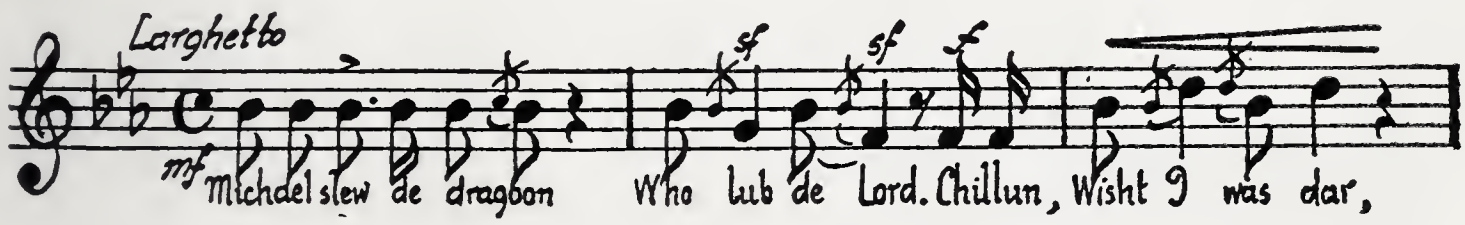
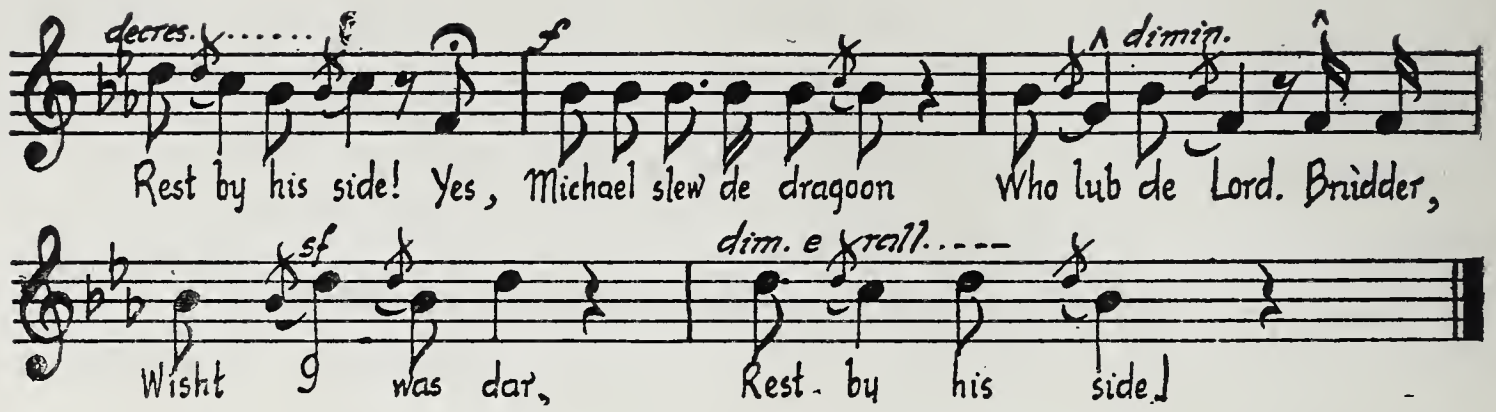
out upon the dreamy air, floated and swelled and fell the old Negro melodies, sung to her through babyhood into childhood, from childhood into womanhood. Yet they seemed different,—somehow. Where was the freedom, the lilt, the swing, that used to make her feel those old songs so? The voices seemed so different, though sometimes through a burst of song would weakly sound a quavering expressive voice with the old intonations, the familiar phrasing, the last voice left, it seemed, of the many that had once filled with their untutored spontaneous melody the days and just such nights as this, nights when the moon caressed the sleeping earth as it was doing now. That one remaining voice made her feel as if the pageant of the irresponsible, light-hearted, childlike black people of her early years were done and only that last lone masquer remained, weary, and waiting to leave the once gay scene.

A new song was just starting out yonder. The young girl closed her eyes and listened to the familiar old spiritual, every word and note of which she knew, although, even after having arrived at years of discretion, they conveyed no meaning to her, puzzle her brain as she might. Yet, it seemed to mean something, too; at any rate, she liked to hear it, just as a memory. Now rising on the soft night air, now dying almost into a sigh of song, it came:





Over and over again rang the same quaint melody with its never-to-be-interpreted words, until at length it wandered away into silence, and only the resistless mystery of the moonlight remained, unbroken but for an occasional leaf-whisper.

Suddenly the young woman was aroused from her revery by the beat of a footstep behind her, irregular, shuffling, and the bent form of the old waiting-man, Andrew, moved slowly toward her along the piazza.

"Why, is it really as late as that, Andrew?" she asked without turning, as she heard him set about some final night task.

"Yessum, leel missy. Eberyone een de house done gone upstairs long ago. Andrew t'ought ee'd jes' fix de cheers now fo' de night, ef yo' don' min'." Then, after a busy pause, he went on with the familiarity of a trusted old servant: "Don' yo' t'ink, missy, dat eet's mighty onwise a-settin' out yere so fur eento de night, wid de jew a-fallin' an' nuttin ober yo' haid?"

"Oh, nothing ever hurts me, you know, Andrew. Besides, I lost all idea of how late it must be getting. I've been dreaming, thinking of the old days when I was just 'The Child' to everybody. It was listening to the servants

singing 'way out in the kitchen, maybe, and sitting here in the moonlight and all that, that brought the good old days back to me. Why, I could almost fancy myself being sung to sleep again by dear old mauma, only that her voice isn't there."

In loving remembrance

She always talked to Andrew just after the friendly, almost confidential fashion of her baby days; for he treated her with the same deferential adoration as in the old time. To him she was still only the loved "leel missy," not one day older than when she used to follow him about his duties and drink in her first ideas of religion from that simple fount of spiritual knowledge.

"An' is yo' really been list'nin' to de singin'? Yo'

don' say, leel missy! Well, well, well! Did yo' know dat I was out dere wid de niggers, too, tryin' to teach dem how to gib 'spression to de ole chunes? But 'tain' no use, missy —'tain' no use. Yo' *can'* mek eet de same t'ing. Seems like de sperrit am gone, jes' like de ole folks am gone, and de ole voices am gone. Missy, sometimes I ax mase'f is I gwine be lef' de lone real black pusson on disher place."

"You need never be afraid of that, Andrew," said his young mistress reassuringly as her eyes looked dreamily out over the sleeping garden. "As long as the kitchen remains as full of colored servants as it is now, you can't possibly be left alone."

"Oh, 'tain't dat, missy—'tain' dat. But, yo' see, ole Andrew sho' do git lonesome sometimes. Eet's jes' dat de cullud folks don' seem de same like dey uster—jes' zackly like de chunes don' sound de same. W'y, eben dem dat uster be black chilluns ain' like dey uster be. Dey ain' sati'fy no mo'. Dey wants to be eddicated. Eddicated! As ef dat'll mek 'em jes' like w'ite mens! Eet won' neber do eet, leel missy—eet won' neber do no sicher t'ing; yo' kin maark ma word. Yes, missy; always min' wot I tells yo' dis bery blessed night: a eddicated nigger won' neber be nuttin 'tall *but* a eddicated nigger—an' dat's all."

The young girl smiled enigmatically up into the sympathetic face of the attentive moon, but it was a needless precaution, for the faithful old waiting-man was walking wearily away.

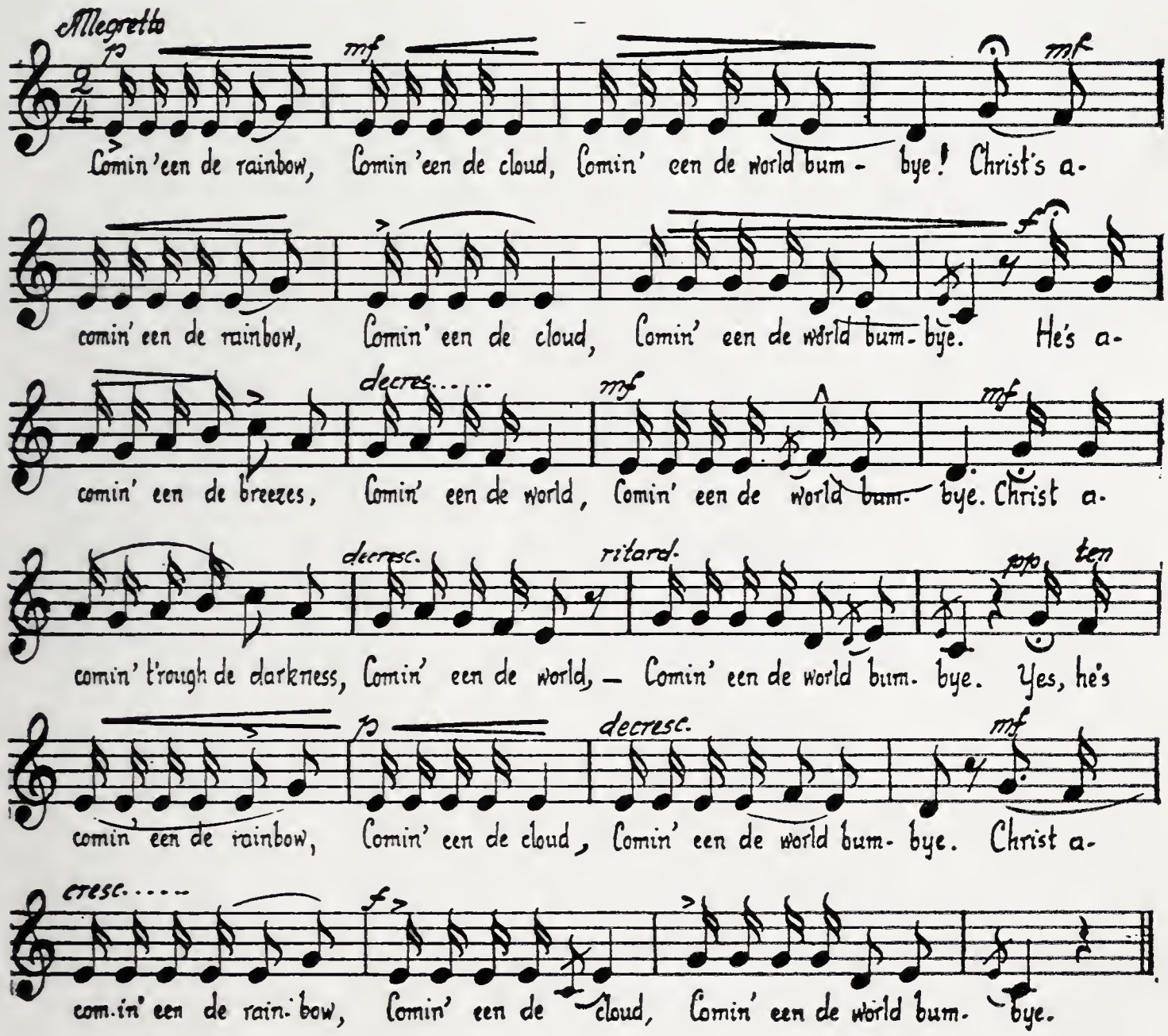
As she looked after the once erect form, now so feeble, so bent, creeping into the shadow, a nameless feeling for the devoted family servant stirred the young woman's

heart. He had taken several steps along the generous piazza, when a soft call went out after him:

"Good-night, Andrew!—good-night!"

"Good-night, me leel missy; an' God bless yo', honey! —God bless yo', chile!"

And as he stood so, a wraith of the past, far over the stillness, the familiar old hymn broke harmoniously from the distant Negro throats:



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